



The Promethean Blue Apocalypse

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BLUE APOCALYPSE

Like any other, this past year was full of many hard lessons that were difficult to swallow. It's easy to feel like the world is falling apart sometimes, or worse, that you're alone in the devastation. However, remember that when it feels like the end of the world, you will find sanctuary in your community, your loved ones, your passions, and in yourself.

It is my greatest hope that you also will find sanctuary throughout these pages, a collection of our voices coming together to create something beautiful.

This issue is dedicated to the College of Arts & Sciences. In times of struggle, I would like to reiterate some of the most important lessons I've learned in these classes:

1. Think critically, but do not underestimate the power of a gut feeling.
2. Do not be happy with the wrong answer because it is the easiest.
3. Never leave a question blank. Go for partial credit.
4. Listen actively to others, because diversity is what empowers discourse.
5. Remember to cite your sources.

On behalf of Dr. Kimberly Knutsen, my Assistant Managing Editor, Julia Guzman, our team of student editors, and all of our talented contributors, I am honored to present to you the 2018-2019 issue of *The Promethean: Blue Apocalypse*.

– Sydney Rose Quintana, Managing Editor

*This is the way the world ends
Not with a bang but a whimper.*

- T.S. Eliot

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the beginning

Dominique Donald

twinkle lights
jump
into my
eyes.
i
was
floating
on top
of
clouds
made
from stars.
asteroids
filled
the windows.
i
died
in the
house
full of
gas.
exploding red
consumed
purity.
i
died
in the house
that was
built
for me.

the Gardener

Calia Kammer

through this landscape only known

by The Unknown

i hear the invitations—

dance with Me, dear, here in the desert;

I'll stay here swaying and leaping

until the creosote and parched salt flats

learn their rhythm again

on the forest floor we can crawl in awe

making sure to let every spiraling fungus and tender cedar needle

imprint our palms and knees.

Breathe in the hints of unborn springs travelling deep beneath us

and learn to smile at their mystery

careful now, tip-toe like I do here at the old oak tree

not out of timidity

but as to not wake the splintered seedling curled up among the low
branches

I kneel here at the mother oak's trunk
and stroke the little one's battered buds
until she is ready to wake
and meet the sunrise



Rocky Creek Bridge © Garrett Broberg

calochortus

Calia Kammer

i am a lily

dipped in wet cement

then frozen.

Beauty, sweetness and light still watercolor my core, yes

But describe myself?

i'd say "brittle"—

Compacted and hardened, but don't mistake that for strength

i am not soft, but when I break my shards pierce your feet

we keep telling each other

we're not as horrendous as we think

that we are instead splendid, exquisite and boundless

Why can't we be both?

a breathing paradox seems far more fascinating

because it means

that my redeemed existence is not dependent

on me

Border Babies

Montserrat Caro

I

The place I call home is divided in two. There is a fence in the middle that on the North side is bare, its color palette ranging from a grey to a brown, with spontaneous oxidation stains. But on the South side it has life, it comes alive with its warm colors, thoughtful art, and inspirational words. On the South side of this fence, we try to celebrate; even our heartbreaks bring color and life to every aspect of living. On the North side of this fence, dreams are said to come true, but it is not always specified at what cost. I like to call the North side of this fence San Diego, California and the South side Tijuana, Mexico.

II

St. Charles Catholic School was like any other elementary school. Our favorite part of the day was when the bell rang and it was recess. We would all run outside, the boys headed for the patchy green field to play soccer and the girls to the yellow and red playground. Sometimes, when there was a helicopter flying over the field, everyone would yell at this boy in my class, Pedro. Everyone would tease him that “the migra,” or immigration, was here looking for him and his dad, and that they needed to go hide. Everyone, including Pedro, would laugh. Other times, the helicopter flew so close over the school that the engine roared louder than our own thoughts. When this happened, we had lockdowns because there was word out that someone had illegally crossed the border and was on the run. We all sat patiently in our locked and dark

classrooms against the wooden cabinets, keeping quiet just in case someone tried to hide in our school.

III

Juanita is a woman in her forties with dark brown hair that is always up in a bun. She is a woman with clear, soft, light brown skin and faint wrinkles around her mouth and eyes. Once a week, she comes over around 10:00 a.m. and works cleaning our house. She knows us all very well by now yet always ends up putting my brother's clothes in my closet and my dad's clothes in my brother's drawers. She has two young boys and is married to a typical macho Mexican man, of whom she is sometimes afraid. She calls my mom Señora Irma and tells her that she is her best friend and favorite person to work for. My mother and Juanita have an agreement that if anything happens to Juanita, if she is deported or detained, my mom should be the one contacted, and she will take care of her children.

IV

On weekdays at 4:00 a.m., I am most likely sleeping with the company of my white and grey cat, far into my dreams. For some, weekdays at 4:00 a.m. mean hardworking people are on their way to make it past that fence so they can get to work on time. When the sky is its darkest blue and the moon is still on its shift, countless people get into their cars to make that commute towards the North. When I am deep asleep, dreaming about meeting Frida Kahlo and having a conversation over coffee and cigarettes, people are preparing to start their day. On these same weekdays, my uncle wakes up and gets ready for work while my

aunt makes him breakfast and packs him a lunch. When he is done with his meal, he kisses her goodbye and she gives him his blessing with the sign of the cross. She goes back to bed and he drives towards their “American dream.”

V

We are told what we can and cannot have in our possession when we make our way towards the North side of the fence. We cannot have flowers, most fruits, meat, or Cuban cigars, among many other things. There is always a line of border patrols who are in charge of checking the validity of what you are declaring and ultimately deciding if you can continue on your journey. On some days, there may be a man or woman begging for money amongst the cars. They may be blind, crippled, or sick. But if they are too close to the North side, the officers will push them away with shoves and screams, showing no mercy. Other days, you may be forced to step outside of your car after having waited for two hours in the same spot, crouching behind it in fear because a person was found with a gun and everyone was told to do so. And other days, you will make it to the border patrol, and to your surprise he is one of your kind and you mumble, “Traitor.”

VI

There is a place on the North side of the fence that has sky high murals depicting the struggles of Mexicans and Mexican-Americans in “the Land of the Free.” If you stand in the center and look to your right, you will see Cesar Chavez leading a crowd of people, their skin dark and rigid from working long hours in the field under the blazing sun. If you

look to your left you can spot a small playground resting on a patch of grey sand. The playground is silver with hints of the colors it used to be: red, blue, green, and yellow. If you look ahead, you see the Virgen de Guadalupe holding a cross that says “not forgotten” in her left hand and carrying a jug of water for those making it across the fence in her right. She is marching towards you alongside her people. And if you look behind you, you can admire a small garden housing fluorescent green cacti. This place, its art, its history, and its people, is a hidden gem.

VII

The place I call home has an unnecessary fence in the middle. It is used to restrict the flow of organic things yet does nothing to stop the flow of ignorance. While this fence is still up, people on the South side will continue to believe that the ones on the North side are pretentious. They will continue to believe that the only place where big things can be done and people can make it in life is on the opposite side. And people on the North side will continue to fear horrible violence on the South side. Until this fence is torn down, whether it be physically or not, people on either side will continue to view themselves as rivals.

Just as my home has been divided in two, so has the home of many others. Yet each situation is unique. Sometimes it feels like the sun and the moon only rise where you yearn to be. Sometimes it feels like you are exactly where you are supposed to be. Other times, you don't know where you truly want to be, or who you want to be. The division may be physical, emotional, or mental. But the division is real.

I

Zabdiel lives in Vancouver, Washington where the sky is mostly grey and where the pine trees are high enough to whisper into the moon. Almost every morning, he wakes up to raindrops stuck on his window and almost every night, he closes his eyes to visualize his home: a small town in the countryside of Veracruz, Mexico where the summers are unexplainably hot, the sky always a clear shade of light blue, and the mangos extra sweet. He sees himself lying on the dry grass, rain falling onto his face, breathing in the humid air until his mom calls him inside to join her and his grandma for afternoon coffee.

II

In the seventh grade he fell in love with art. His favorite part of art is creating it, painting his thoughts onto an empty canvas. In the seventh grade he was given the opportunity to travel to one of the art capitals of the world with his favorite class. He would meet Mona Lisa face-to-face and see with his own eyes the beautiful architecture of the country of Love. Everything seemed perfect. He had the money, time, and desire. All he was missing was permission from his parents. When his parents said no, he realized two things: he was trapped in “the Land of the Free,” and as long as he was just an alien in this country, he would not be accepted for who he was.

III

If he could, he would drop anything and everything to see his family again. To lie on the hammock and watch the sun get lost behind the

trees on a still, warm afternoon. To stay up day and night filling in holes in his mind and heart with memories and untold stories. To ask his family what life has been like since he left, if they think of him as much as he thinks of them. To kiss his abuelita's cheek in the morning before sitting down and having breakfast. To take the love of his life down the seemingly endless dirt path to the beach—the same one his dad took the love of his life as a teenager. To meet up with the same stunning ocean that his parents once knew. To lie next to the ocean and listen to all the sounds his parents heard, and to look around and see all the beauty his parents grew up around. If only he could, he would.

IV

They were walking towards the glorified land where the grass is said to be greener and the sun is said to shine brighter when he broke into tears. Two years old in his mother's arms under the still, clear sky with scattered plush clouds surrounding them. He cried uncontrollably, his mother nervous, as everyone would blame her if something went wrong. They had been on this journey for what seemed a lifetime, making their way to their new life. Suddenly, his mother looked into his big brown eyes full of tears and whispered, “shh vamos a ir a ver a tu papi.” *Shh, we are going to see your daddy.* Once those words sank in and he was reassured their journey had a true purpose, his crying came to an abrupt stop. In his two-year-old mind, he was not making this journey towards a glorified land but towards his family: the only thing that mattered then and that has ever mattered.

V

His home is divided between reality and what seems to be real. On Monday mornings when I wake him up at 8:00 a.m. to leave for work, being a twenty-year-old brick mason is his reality. On the drive to work, strolling through the streets of Veracruz seems like a far-off dream. But on Saturday afternoons when he sits around the kitchen table and his parents share stories about life back home, reality shifts. The visualization of strong banana trees standing tall outside the kitchen window is his reality. In the blink of an eye, he can be in Veracruz holding his grandmother's arm as they make their way to the corner store. And yet his body sits on the wooden chair of his parent's apartment in Vancouver, Washington. It's on days like these that reality becomes blurry and the borders which categorize his home disappear.

Drowning

Angelika Cava

they swim recklessly

up

down

left

right

diagonal

jumbled

no space left unexplored
the scattered school of fish
wants to escape.

unbreakable glass surrounds us

no food for days
filter clogged with crud
most people walk by
we are not seen.
some look for food
it is not found.

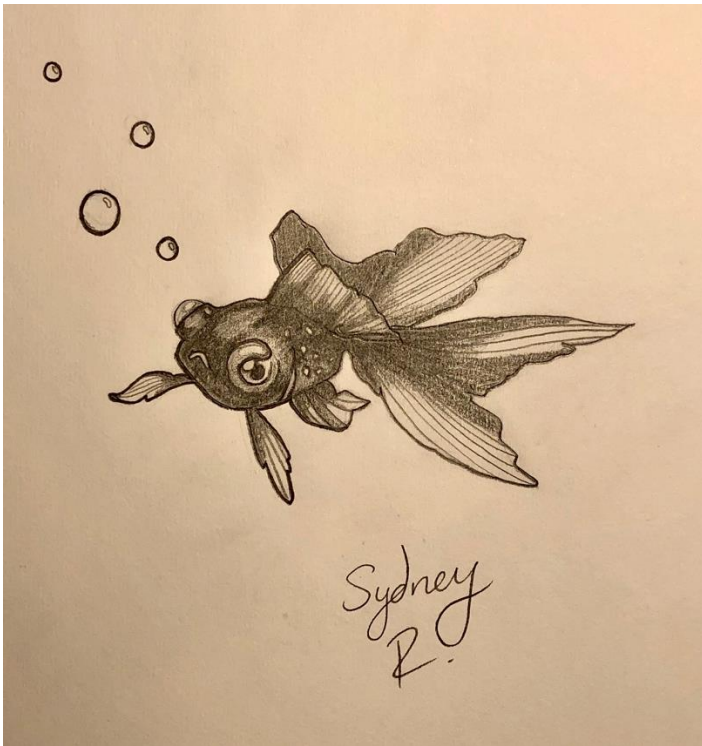
hunger deludes the fish
only problems exist
currents of logic and reason
push the fish back
with solutions to endless anxiety
smart currents, but stronger fish
that constantly beat me down
I can't swim, I float around
no particular direction.
no goals.
no future.

all I see is water,
dark and murky

I am drowning
but my lungs keep fighting
I think I want to stop
I think I want to suffocate

deep down I want to shatter the glass

but I can't reach it



Fish © Sydney Ramsey

An Ocean's Rage

Payton Gillis

The moon's gravitational pull is strong.

On the tides and on us.

April 7, 2013, I ran with you from grandmother's small two-bedroom house, newly painted a soothing yellow, to the ocean. You always trotted behind me due to your bad knee that made it hard for you to keep up. I felt bad at times, but your joyful laugh that echoed behind me reassured me that you were having a good time. As the therapeutic humming of waves blended less and less, turning into crisp crashes, we were reassured our sprinting would soon come to a glorious halt.

As soon as we reached the clearing at the top of Division Street, we stopped to catch our breath. The wind splashed our faces, pushing your thick black and grey hair off your wrinkled, Native forehead. The horizon stretched so straight that day that the sunset glared off the smooth water into your dark brown irises. Blinding. Your wrinkled face squinted hard and glanced down at me. "Ready kiddo?"

"Yes!" I said excitedly.

We set off, down the steep slope until the gravel road met sand. As we began taking off our old, withered shoes that we dedicated to beach days you asked, "How far do you think we're going to walk today, P?"

"To where we always do, duh!"

"Okay, now, but you remember what not to do. Right?"

"I know... I know..."

"Well, what is it then?"

“Never turn your back to the ocean, Papa.”

“And why’s that?”

“Sneaker waves, Papa...” Having repeated this at least twenty million times in my lifetime, I thought I should get it tattooed on my forehead at this point.

Perhaps I didn’t get the point, because your death was the only sneaker wave that wiped me off my feet.

Our spot was roughly forty minutes from where we began our journey. We knew we were there when the plush sand shifted into dark lava rock. The smooth dark slate eventually built up into a skyscraper piled high with boulders that divided *our* beach and the beach of Depoe Bay.

The hill of rocks consisted of beautiful sea life, and at times the most suspicious deaths. Every trip, we ran into horrendous findings, from starfish and sea urchins to sea lions and seagulls, some of which had been ripped in half. Their graveyard lay at the bed of rocks at the bottom of the slope. Some days we found more death than life.

Of the few creatures that survived on our beach, sea anemones were my favorite. They huddled together in small pools of water that the lava rock cradled gently. Their complexions varied from oranges and greens to blues and purples, creating a beautiful image of life on a dark canvas. My curious fingers found their way into their cold habitat. Breaking the faint moon’s reflection on the surface of glassy water, my hands drifted in, brushing their whimsical string-like tentacles that flourished in their own rhythmic current.

Although numb, I could still feel the suction cups at the end of each tentacle latch onto my nearly purple fingers. They lured me in, as if calling me to join them.

I wish I could.

Like you did.

A week from the last time I saw you. April 15, 12:24 PM. A package arrived from you in a three by six, reused cardboard box. Its edges were no longer noble and strong, but jagged and beaten. You suffocated it in duct tape. Twice across horizontally and once over perpendicularly. Inside the flimsy box lay a note on top of two little gifts individually wrapped in white tissue paper.

The note was written on yellow lined paper, and was folded twice, hot-dog style. Scribbled in blue ink, it read:

Mikayla,

Love you so much. Hope you are having an amazing tenth birthday. Can't wait to see you again.

Love,

Papa

Twenty words were all you wrote before you drowned yourself in liquor.

It wasn't until 9 PM that we found out those were the last gifts you would ever send. It wasn't until 9 PM that the note, the silver sand dollar necklace, and that mood ring possessed a ghostly aura.

Why is life so closely tied to death?

The days that the wind on the beach carried the putrid smell of rotting sea creatures, we knew we would find ourselves hovering over

every deceased animal to examine them. Once we arrived at the lava rock, we began trying to determine the story that led them there. You'd be my assistant at the scene of the crime. "What do you think happened to this unlucky fella?" you would ask.

I'd play the pathologist and began performing the autopsy with a nearby stick of my choosing. Pointing to the area that seemed the most grueling, I'd diagnose their cause of death. "Well, you see, Dr. Gillis, as of now I'm quite unsure, but my prediction is that Sally the Sea Lion must've run into a hungry Great White... Or perhaps she got so seasick she passed away and became a starving seagull's dinner."

I'm sure the pathologist performing your autopsy had an easy time diagnosing you. She would jot down "a drunk" on her sheet of observations. I don't blame her. That's all I could see in you for a while after your death.

However, I hope somewhere within the fifteen minutes she observed you she took the time to acknowledge the crows' feet in the corners of your eyes and the deep creases that connected your mouth to your nose. Although you were an alcoholic, you sure knew how to laugh. You sure knew how to make *me* laugh.

Grandma insisted we spread your ashes at our spot.

It took me about two and a half years of punishing you by letting you sit in that small silver urn on top of Grandma's fireplace mantle before I found the courage to let you go.

November 20, 2015. I walked down with you one last time to our beach.

The air was oddly still that day as I began my journey. Every so often, there was a gust of wind that crashed onto my face and tugged my hair in every direction. Its strength made me hug the cold, smooth surface of the place you've called home for quite some time now. Occasionally, the lid to your urn rocked back and forth, warning me to hold you upright and to slow down a little more.

I walked deliberately and soaked in every detail, like I wish I had the last time I saw you.

The chirps of sparrows rippled through the pine trees. They sang a lovely melody for us until the music of the ocean gradually tuned them out. The sound of waves crashing and seagulls crying consumed my ears. My footsteps muddled as I made my way into the welcoming sand. I sat on the wooden bench made out of a piece of driftwood and gently put you down beside me.

I began to untie my beat-up Converse, sliding my feet out of them with ease. I tugged off my thin grey socks. The sand was plush and mimicked the warmth my socks brought me. Comforting. I picked up your now warm urn and headed off parallel to the horizon.

Behind me, the cliff rises higher than ever before. Its wet edges send beams so bright that the bare eye can do nothing but look away from its dazzling beauty. Where land and water meet, I begin my walk home empty-handed, accepting life's ocean full of juxtapositions, both rhythmic waves and sneaker waves, joys and sorrows, life and death.

It brings both low and high tides of you.

The moon's gravitational pull is strong.

My Self-Esteem Left Me There

J.C.G.

I stare at the center of the circle, trying to force myself to listen to the voice vibrating through the table from a phone across the room. It wants me to concentrate on the light in the space—but that's hard to do when your eyes are watering.

The salted rain changes the light: it makes it too bright.

I thank my terrible timing for the fact that I walked in during meditation; most of them kept their eyes closed. They didn't look at me and smile in that way people do: condescending.

I swipe at my cheeks hoping to get the tears before anyone notices, and that my face isn't too blushed or swollen.

Who am I kidding?

I can't meditate right now. As soothing as I find Andy Puddicombe, I can't zone in today. I'm restless, and my heels are throbbing from the pounding they got on the sidewalk, on the staircase, through the library. All I can think is how much I **DON'T WANT TO BE HERE!!**

I'm at least fifteen minutes late. How do I let this happen to me? Why? I was watching the clock the whole time.

Maybe that's what I did wrong. Each and every time I looked over my shoulder at that digital timekeeper, I wasted a quarter of a second. And maybe another with the time it took to turn my head back. Every half of a second must have built up until I had somehow wasted three minutes I didn't have to spare.

Another five were stolen by my body, by the gravity of the earth, by physics itself. Maybe if I wasn't a hundred pounds overweight, I could speed walk to class a minute and a half faster. Maybe if I was actually, consistently, motivated to be active, I would feel comfortable enough to run to class and get there three minutes faster.

The last seven are probably how late I would have been to begin with. As much as I would like to find some inanimate aspect of the universe to blame, I should have printed the assignment out sometime last night, yesterday morning, or Tuesday afternoon.

Even worse, I spent about thirty minutes this morning debating what to eat for breakfast, having completely forgotten that I needed to print...

The voice stops, and everyone around me starts to stir. I force myself to breathe, letting my hair swing in front of my face while I robotically pull out my binder. Then I uselessly debate whether the blue or purple biro is to be my weapon of choice before I tattoo the paper with empty words.

What happened to that bright, rainbow outlook you were talking about, the one with the golden clock and the silver scoreboard?

I watch as she tears herself away from me, the smarter, skinnier, confident shadow of me. I watch her glare at me in disappointment and let her flick my forehead before placing her finger on my notebook. Her face transforms with a soft smile, calming me.

Let it all out, just like you planned.

Her finger taps the wounded pages, and I flip to a new canvas.

Put it all there, and when you're done—

I tilt my head to watch as she peels her wings from her skin.

You know where to find me.

She integrates into, then through, the firm water of the glass wall. I didn't need to watch her to know she never hit the pavement below.

Anxiety

Kittie Robbins

Droplets singing airily into your heart
Through gentle notes of pain and envy
As your head sinks into your pillow.
You remember what was hidden,
Those poisonous thoughts that infect your brain.
They fill your lungs with sand
And your fingers with stone.
They sink you into that empty place
That's only familiar with fear.
They make your brain collapse
Upon itself when you try to make it stop.
They take away all the air,
Tie your hands behind your head,
And fill your mouth with blood.
They don't stop until you fall
Into a restless sleep
Without nightmares
Because you know
That when you wake
The nightmare will begin again.

A Guide to Social Safety

Angelika Cava

At some point in our lives, everyone has to deal with problems that are caused exclusively by other people. Let's face it. Humans are inherently shitty, even if we try not to be. We'll all hurt someone and we'll all be hurt by someone.

You might be wondering how to avoid this potential pain. You might have just experienced it, and it sucked, so you never want to feel it again. You might have given it to someone, and you're experiencing crippling guilt for your disgusting actions. You might have heard someone else's horror stories about other people. If you are any of the above, I have just the answer for you! Let's talk about some of the benefits that come from participating in Avoidance:

1. Almost 100% guarantee that you won't get hurt by someone you trust! *You won't trust anyone!*
2. You won't have to get to know people you don't like! *You won't get to know anyone!*
3. It could improve your imagination! *You'll be alone a lot; what better to entertain you than your own mind?*
4. While there is a chance of accidentally insulting people by ignoring them, you won't hurt them in a more painful way! *How can not talking be worse than saying the wrong thing?*

Sounds good right? Trust me, it is. And you can start becoming a member of the Avoidance club today! No meetings, of course.

First, only do the bare minimum of what is required of you socially. If you have any friends, say goodbye to hanging out with them. If you're forced to attend any family gatherings, make

sure you put on your best resting bitch face the whole time. Don't make any small talk with cashiers or waiters; only reply to them with one word answers. Honestly, it's best not to even look at anyone if you're in public.

If you feel the desire to start a relationship with someone, make sure you convince yourself that you're not good enough. Remind yourself about how socially incompetent you are or have become. Don't be afraid to think of yourself as ugly or unlikable, and don't be afraid to assume the person in whom you are interested thinks those things about you. When loneliness consumes your mind, remember the pain other people have caused you, and then magnify it by one million.

Unfortunately, taking part in Avoidance does come with some negative side effects:

1. Not having a social life. Ever. No trying on new outfits with friends at the mall, or drinking with buddies at the bar. If you ever want to try out a new restaurant, you'll be getting takeout alone. Forget the prospect of going on a date with the hot guy or girl you sit next to in class.
2. Loss of self-esteem. Hey, the best way to stop yourself from talking to someone is to live in a world of complete and isolated shame. You may not have confidence, but nobody will hurt you but yourself!

But these little problems are worth it if you never have to experience rejection or ridicule again, right?

So don't be afraid! To start your free trial of Avoidance, all you have to do is run to your room and lock yourself in it! Make sure nobody else is with you!

Catly Love

Shannon Leigh & Ayla Johnson

Dedicated to all the British pervs who believed in courtly love

She sits upon the window sill, alone,
almond-shaped eyes reflecting the soft light.
Her ginger hair aglow like ruby stones,
she lounges, capturing my heart and sight.

An Egyptian queen full of feline grace
who rules my thoughts, but for me does not care.
The more I reach, the more she claws my face.
I bleed and pout yet all she does is stare.

She stalks away: I feel small as a mouse
that she toys with and leaves after the kill.
My affections her rejections arouse.
Although catty, I find I love her still.

While she sleeps I'll find her, just wait and see;
With fresh tuna I'll lure her back to me.



Beatrice & Bill © Dominique Donald

The Weight of Remembrance

Anna Denos

I remember how it felt when you came home at night. The pastel glow from low-burning candles filled the room and the atmosphere of peace enveloped the house like a blanket. I recall how my brother and I leapt off the sofa and ran towards the entryway, bare feet padding across the cool carpet. We raced to you, each silently yearning to be the first one swept up in your arms, the first one whose face was tickled by your ginger whiskers. I remember the feeling of tranquility in the air around us, so tangible now in my memory, though then only a common thing.

I remember how you loved your art, the food you crafted with your hands. We sat at the old kitchen table and watched as you worked. Your big, black apron concealed your prominent stomach, the trademark of any true chef, as you diced, drizzled, and stirred. I recall the medley of aromas—the sweet scent of caramelized onion, the subtle undertones of butter—that awoke the beast in my stomach, drawing out a round of impassioned growls. I can see your pride as you placed the steaming risotto on the table, and my excitement as the first bite entered my mouth.

I remember the days you had off from work, when the snow whirled down in thick flakes that caught on your eyelashes and melted on my tongue. I picture my brother and me piling onto the old metal sled, feel the air swooshing from my lungs and my insides sloshing to the beat of your footsteps as you dragged us down the packed and slippery road. I remember your face, ruddy and flushed from the cold but with eyes bright as you watched us frolic about in the white twilight glow.

I remember the dances you took me to. I can picture the lights, the flowers, the warm red hues bathing the room like the blush of a harvest moon. I look back on the cheerful faces, recall the woman with the scarlet lips telling us where to stand. The camera's flash was bright,

but my smile was genuine, the expression of a heart at complete peace with life, a life that knew no sorrow. You were beside me, your joy telling a story in the crinkles by your eyes. So strong, so protecting—I remember you like that.

I don't remember the hands that shook, the eyes that saw the world through a haze. I don't recollect the pill bottles on the counter or the corks, stained with the lifeblood of a thousand grapes, buried in the trash. I don't remember the sharp odor of liquor spoiling your breath or the biting remarks you hurled in my mother's face, but I sensed them working in our home, felt the tranquil atmosphere shrivel and wilt in their heat.

I don't remember the words that were pronounced as they laid your body in the ground that smothering afternoon. A sea of black surrounded me, a shroud of darkness worn by people whose names I did not know, whose sympathy I could not accept. We stood together with heads bowed towards the grass and tears leaking from reddened eyes. You were not there to hold me. You would never be there again.

I do not remember those first days without you. The endless weeks are painted black in my mind, scribbled over with a Sharpie until only the vaguest of outlines peek through. I watched as the summer of my seventh year melted into the ceaseless drip of autumn and the sun wrapped itself in its dreary winter cloak. The world was making ready for the season ahead. Perhaps I was making ready too.

I remember the things you said to me the night I never dreamt was to be our last. Your once strong face was worn, etched with scars from battles I did not know you had fought. Battles you did not know you had lost. You spoke to me then and your words were tender: "I love you, Sissy B." I can picture the way you smiled, how you bent down to gently kiss my face. I remember you now, I remember you like that.

Unforgettable Moments

Grace Aklestad

He'd use those three words like a weapon
Yielding them to accomplish his next objective
And every time he pulled out his three-word sword
He would carve out a piece of me for himself
Taking pleasure in leaving it on the ground
Watching the blood drain out and die

Two years of losing piece after piece
Left me with only a small bit of heart
Attempting to pump blood throughout my body
Yet my remains lay gray and lifeless
A pile of mangled body parts
The carnage of three words

The words by themselves were harmless
Flattering even
It was often what followed them
That sliced off piece after piece of my being

The metaphorical sword was soon replaced
By very real fists and firm hands
Starting as a just barely-too-hard shove
A slap in a particularly heated moment.
Quickly my wardrobe was filled with black turtlenecks
Fresh-faced look replaced by thick smudges of concealer

Pushes became punches
Me saying no, but him forgoing my autonomy
Hands cutting off air

Flushed cheeks replaced by a purple tint
Dark, splotchy remnants dotting my body
Reminders that my life was not mine to control

And if I forgot, a short text
Saying where I might find him in the morning
If I didn't find a way to stop him
"The ball's in your court," he'd say
A hint: I'd find him at the basketball courts
Tying a sturdy rope to the hoop

Begging and pleading ensued
He'd push me around a while
Place the blame on my shoulders
Tell me I should be the one hanging
Have his way with me while I complacently obliged
And then it was over as quickly as it started
We were as we were, until the next time

Standing in front of a mirror
Gingerly covering the oblong purple welts
Of fingers on my neck
Wondering how I got here
If I'll ever escape
And what pieces of myself
I'll be forced to leave behind
As I flee

Wildfire

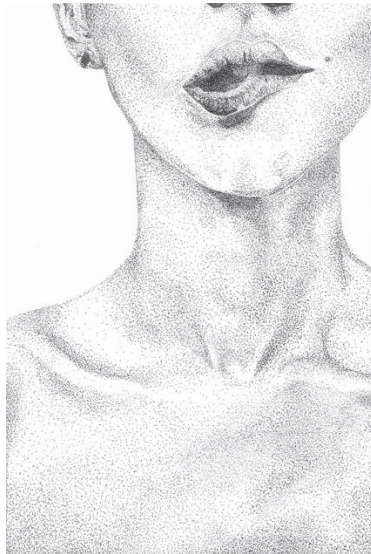
Sydney Rose Quintana

Her words settle under my skin like wildfire,
teasing tired bones and kissing gentle flesh,
blazing their way through my nerve endings,
scorching away pleasure and pain
until nothing but cold remains.

Blood red fire dances along her white noise,
I cannot hear myself anymore.

Because she—she is no accidental inferno
tamed by water and prayer
not her, no—not her.
she is wildfire incarnate

and it burns.



Vanity © Dana Hardy

One Long Night

Shannon Leigh

Spooky Story Contest Honorable Mention

Another test, another all-nighter.

“Why did I start that new show *before* I started studying?” I moan aloud, my papers and textbooks splayed out around me on the bedroom floor. My roommate, clad in pajamas, retainer already in place, frowns sympathetically down at my predicament.

“I told you it was addictive, Clara. And that twist at the end of season two—”

“Spoiler! Don’t tell me, I stopped after that creepy clown came back. He hid in the closet until everyone was asleep, and then...” I trail off because that episode had me checking all the closets this morning, and it still gives me the heebie-jeebies if I think about it for too long. “Are you sure you don’t want to take this test for me, Bea? You love this biology stuff.”

She snorts and shakes her head. “You’ll be fine. Just try to get some sleep tonight; you know you can’t think straight when you’re too tired.” And with that she leaves me alone with my nightmare stack of notes and chapters to memorize by morning. It’s only ten o’clock, I can do this!

-

It’s 12:30 a.m., and I’m not so sure I can do this. One minute I’m reviewing aquatic food chains, and the next I find my eyes closing without my permission. I need to get my blood pumping and sugared up, so I go prowling for snacks. I hunt down goldfish crackers and some chocolates, but as the plastic crinkles in my hands, I hear another noise. I whip around but see nothing besides our frayed couch and deep shadows. My eyes flicker to the entryway closet, and I try to steady my nerves. *Clowns aren’t real*, I remind myself. Well, they are, just not the murdering kind. Well, probably not.

I sidle back to my room, keeping an eye on that closet. This time I close my bedroom door behind me and breathe a little sigh of relief at the well-lit sense of security in here, which somehow makes this closet less menacing. Back to biology.

-

The snacks are finished, and so am I. I've been stuck on this PowerPoint for ages. Why should I care who discovered which types of fungus?

Bea told me she takes power naps when she needs to push through like this. I glance over my study plan, see all the untouched chapters, and decide to try it. I set my alarm for twenty minutes and hope this will work.

-

When my alarm jangles, I struggle through my tangled blankets to turn it off. The dreams were vivid for such a short sleep, featuring all kinds of characters from my new television addiction. If only I had gotten hooked on a comedy. But no, instead my dreams were full of monstrous attacks and lots of running away. The only perk is that I have plenty of adrenaline in my system now, and I put it to good use.

-

During the wee hours, time passes strangely. After that scary small sleep, I blast through three chapters in an hour and feel like a champion studier. But then, in a matter of ten minutes, I lose my edge, and every little noise makes me jump. I stare at words on a page, but only my eyes are on the material. My increasingly sluggish thoughts keep circling back to that murderous clown, and I become very aware of the closet door behind me, and of who could be hiding behind it.

I check the time: it's been half an hour and I've barely done anything. I decide to try another power nap. But first, I need to check the closet.

I wrench open the door, #2 pencil brandished like a carving knife, and see nothing to sink my lead into but my clothes. I laugh at my own foolishness as I look in all the closet's corners, just to make sure.

This time I allow myself a longer nap. Twice the sleep, twice the study mojo, right? I set the alarm for 3:30 a.m. then change it to 3:33 a.m. Three is my lucky number, after all.

I will myself to have good dreams and fall asleep immediately.

-

It is morning, and I'm late. No time for coffee, just change clothes and fly out the door. I am hoping for light traffic, and hallelujah, I zip across the bridge in record time. I race across the parking lot, up the stairs, and into the classroom. I am surprised to see no one is here yet, but then realize that the fast drive saved me more time than I realized. I grab a pencil and set down my bag as the door opens. A girl walks in whom I have never met. She looks surprised to see me here. I smile at her since I need to tell her she has to leave.

"I think you're in the wrong room; we have a test today. Monday tests are the worst, aren't they?"

She looks confused, glances at her phone, and looks at me like I'm speaking Finnish.

"Today is Tuesday."

My pencil hits the floor. Some nightmares do come true.

Halloween

Angehyka Cava

Spooky Story Contest Honorable Mention

11:48 PM

I am sitting alone with my arms crossed on the living room couch of a girl who hates me, watching everyone around me in sleazy costumes drink beer and dance to some boring Katy Perry track. Why do I subject myself to this torture? Because it's Halloween, and I have to participate in EVERYTHING related to this glorious holiday.

EVERYTHING includes Kelly Johnson's annual Halloween bash. Even though I wasn't invited, I thought this party would be important enough to crash, yet it's just the same as school, where I'm treated like nothing in a noisy crowd of boring idiots with whom I have nothing in common. The only difference is that this time, I'm technically not forced by the government to situate myself in this hell.

Last time I ever visited Kelly's house was at her eighth grade pool party, where she and her friends held me underwater for five minutes. I couldn't fight back. I just flailed around. When she finally let me come up, I threw up water for hours.

I must admit that my parents are the only reason I'm not leaving right now. When I left, I noticed the looks on their faces, happy to see me doing something with other people my age, for once. They'll (correctly) think I'm a loser if I come home before it ends.

Maybe I can hide by myself in a room. Kelly's house is huge, with seven doors upstairs. The first two I open lead to rooms occupied

with people having a *really* good time, but the third is empty. I guess nobody wanted to make-out in a room with a racecar bed and a crib. Unlike the loving couples I just saw, I lock the doors before I throw myself onto the kiddie bed. I shut my eyes and try to forget that this is the worst Halloween I've ever had.

3:07 AM

Coated in layers of slimy mucus, my throat wakes me up, asking for a glass of warm water and maybe a tablespoon of cough medicine. That's weird. I usually sleep like a bear hibernating through the winter. Metallica could be playing a concert at full volume in my room and I'd snore through the whole thing.

I check my watch. At least it's not Halloween anymore. I can remove my uncomfortable costume. It took me a week to finish this outfit inspired by Road Kamelot from the anime *D. Gray-man*. No one around school knows this character, so I fantasized receiving compliments on my spiky indigo wig and questions asking who I was portraying. But all I got was zilch. I pull my fake hair off and throw it against the wall. The kids who live here can play with it.

The rumbling of heavy electronic bass still thunders through the door. Why don't the neighbors call the cops or something? I just want to get the hell out of here. As confidently as I can, I stroll into the chaos. I notice that most of the people have left. It's just Kelly and her twelve closest friends sprawled around the living room, gossiping over the booming speakers.

I thought that I'd be able to sneak past them, but I guess not.

“What the hell are you doing here?” Kelly stomps over to where I’m standing until she’s inches away from my face. She towers over me, even without her usual stilettos.

“Oh, I’m just leaving,” I casually say, trying to sneak past her, but one of her minions grabs my shoulders.

I watch a smirk creep across Kelly’s makeup-plastered face. Most of her lipstick is smeared from her make-out sessions, so she looks like a clown dressed in a swimsuit. I’m not even sure what she’s supposed to be. I guess she just chose whatever costume showed the most skin. One of Kelly’s sidekicks hands her a knife. “Don’t leave now, the party’s just begun.”

3:33 AM

They’ve mummified me with tight rope, leaving only my head exposed. Kelly stands me in front of her lit fireplace. Is she going to push me in? I guess that would be an interesting way to go. Anything but drowning. I shudder at the thought of water filling my lungs.

My mouth is uncovered, yet I cannot speak. I don’t know what to say. I can’t even scream when Kelly holds the knife right next to my ear.

“Don’t worry. We’re doing you a favor,” someone behind me says.

“You’re so ugly, we’re giving you a free makeover,” Kelly whispers, grabbing a clump of my dry, brown hair. She saws through it with her knife. In a couple of minutes, she has the vast majority of my hair in her hands.

She throws it in the fire. At this point, I wish to go with it.

“You’re sweaty. Maybe we should give you a shower,” another voice says.

“Nah. I think she wants to go for a swim first.” Kelly smiles.

One of the girls, who somehow has the body of a linebacker, throws me over her shoulders and we head out to her backyard. Kelly’s pool is Olympic-sized, and we all gather by the diving board.

Suddenly, I’m flying through the air, and I land gracefully in the water on my belly.

I know it’s only a pool, but the deep end is like an ocean when you can’t swim. With my hands tied to my body, I can’t even flail around this time. Even though my brain knows there is no more air, my body frantically searches for it, inhaling water with every breath. I am aware of every chlorine-filled gulp until



Milky Way Galaxy © Garrett Broberg

The Clock

Liana Parks

Spooky Story Contest Honorable Mention

“Don’t go to the bathroom at 3:00,” Haley whispers. “There’s a man in the mirror. But he’s not there when you turn around.”

We’re curled up under our blankets, in bed, talking. Mom and Dad think we’re asleep, we’re talking so quietly. We’ve been talking about school and boys, but we changed to the dreams we remember the most. Actually, dreams isn’t right. We remember our nightmares.

“But this isn’t a nightmare,” Haley tells me. “I’ve seen him. He’s real.”

“I’ve never seen him.” I say it a little too loud and Haley shushes me. My chest puffs out and I roll my eyes. I’m not scared. I’m nine. I’m too old to be scared. Haley’s only six. She doesn’t know anything.

“He’s real.”

“Whatever. I’m really going to sleep now.” I roll onto my stomach. Looking out at the room I see the glowing red numbers from the little alarm clock I got for my birthday. **8:59 PM.**

The next time I open my eyes it’s **2:58**. I really have to pee. The baby’s down the hall, across from Mom and Dad. Their doors are open. Everyone is sleeping and I don’t want to wake them up.

I tiptoe down the hall, knowing exactly where there are no creaks. I go into the bathroom and close the door. There are no windows because it’s in the middle of the house, and I don’t want people to wake up when I turn on the light, so I close the door before flipping the switch.

When I’m done, I wash my hands and turn off the lights before opening the door again. For some reason I look over my shoulder at the sink, just under the mirror, and freeze.

There in the mirror is the face of a man, at least a head above me. I see his eyes, nose, and mouth outlined in orange-yellow. He looks down at me.

I shake my head, closing my eyes, and he disappears. I know that light can makes you see things when you turn it off. That's all it was.

I hurry back down the hall and into bed. The clock changes. **3:01.**

I lay there, watching the clock. I can feel my heart beating really fast. I don't know if that was real or not. Was Haley right? No. She just spooked me with her story. *Stupid sisters*. My heartbeat slows. My eyes close and I fall back asleep.

My eyes fly open, landing immediately on the glow of the clock.

3:29. Why did I wake up?

Cre-ea-k.

Someone's in the hallway. It can't be Mom or Dad. They wouldn't move that slow. The baby can't get out of his crib and Haley's sleeping below me. I can hear her breathing. I'm frozen, my eyes stuck on the clock. **3:30.**

Cre-ea-k.

Are they moving away from my room? They are. They're right outside the baby's room. Then nothing. **3:31.**

Maybe I was hearing things. Haley scared me more than I thought. I'm going to kill her in the morn—

Cre-ea-k. Cre-ea-k.

They're moving faster, coming back down the hall. I blink. **3:32.**

I hold my breath. I hope they can't hear my heartbeat. The doorknob turns and the door starts opening, slowly. I feel like there's someone else in the room. I can't move. I can't hide.

3:33 AM.

Yellow eyes block my view of the clock.

Snuffed

Brooke Nelson

Spooky Story Contest Runner-Up

In the middle of the night, She lit the last dinner candle with the smoldering wick of its dying predecessor. It came to life with a rescuing kind of gleam. Her hands shook, her chest heaving with uneven breaths. The sullied rags She wore did nothing to stave off the cold while her nose ran chilled snot. One of her hands reached out, ragged fingernails scratching at the shed wall.

Once, She'd painted the metal with her father. Humming nonsensical verses, He joined her, his hand reaching over to tickle the crook of her neck. She laughed when He smeared a line of red paint across her cheek.

But that was before They came.

Like some kind of mouse, She used the chipped wall as an anchor, traveling slowly along its length. Her scabbed foot caught on a root, and She pitched forward. Thought ceased.

She scrambled to save her last bits of light. She threw her arms out before her, holding the candle aloft. The jarring of her elbows on the ground sent shooting pains through her bones while rocks imprinted her knees. Her grip was clammy on the candle's hilt, but sure. She heaved herself up, first settling onto her knees, rocking back to her heels, and upright. On her feet, leaning against the wall, She clung to the candle. The flame danced before her eyes, unaware of its brush with tragedy.

The sky above was empty, devoid of stars: thousands of far-away-saviors blocked by monstrous clouds. She'd burned her last calendar with the rest of the paper but recognized the lunar cycles well enough to know it couldn't be helped. Not even the moon would see her death.

She found the door handle and heaved it open slowly, so as to not disturb her flame. The creaking hinges begged for grease, but they'd burned that with the barn. She shut it with a *thud*, swallowing thickly as She barred it behind her. She turned, back to the door, and slid to the floor, wiping at her nose. The cold seeped into her muscles, like the

concrete had reached up and enveloped her, stripping the warmth away. Knees to her chest, She kept her gaze from the candle, searching in the dim glow of the light. She knew she would find nothing, but They were there.

Waiting.

They seeped in through the small window, and within them darkness rumbled. Keeping to the midnight corners, They lurked, watching as she shivered. They took care to keep distant. Her eyes darted around, finding nothing. Moments passed, and her muscles loosened. She slid her legs down, settling against the floor. They could smell her heady fear, radiating off of her in waves.

Over time, her shuddering eyelids fell closed in exhaustion, only to be forced open again. This repeated itself until they remained closed. Her head tipped back, and she lost herself to sleep.

Silent as the grave, They held their breath, let her think she was safe. And she was...

For the moment.

Her eyes snapped open and She gasped for air. She had fallen asleep, the candle significantly shorter, melted pulls of wax streaming onto her tense fingers. Her gaze darted towards the window; there was still no sign of dawn. Wind howled outside, causing the metal shed to shudder and moan around her. The candle was dimmer than before; it wouldn't keep them at bay.

She gave up searching for them. The flame seemed to burn faster, an ephemeral sprite. Cupping her hands around it, She watched as beads of hot wax dripped against her palms. She let the candle sway slightly, dropping wax across her fingers. They were close.

Each second marked another flicker of light gone forever.

Their presence permeated the surrounding darkness like forest fog. Leaning in, They huffed a dominant breath against her neck, for the light was much too dim. Her body recoiled, arching away, and They

delighted in her revulsion. She tried to see them, but it was much too dark for that. Soon, darkness would be all she knew.

The candle cast a barely-there glow within the cup of her hands, lighting the hollows of her features. For every last flicker, the wick almost drowned in its own fuel, and They loomed around her.

They were closing in.

She blinked, her lip quivering. She watched with a whimper as the last bits of threaded fuse bowed forwards in haunting submission.

Gasping as the light faded, the smoky soul filled her mouth, the wisp sharp against her tongue. In a heavy *ffffwump* of wind, She was surrounded. Her heart thudded in her ears and her chest constricted tightly as the humidity increased around her and something sharp slid across her cheek, leaving a streaming trail of hot blood. She cried out.

She screwed her eyes shut, screaming, while they descended upon her, darkness extinguishing yet another light.



Best of Portland © Dominique Donald

Triple Dipped in Psycho

Kristin Rothell

Spooky Story Contest Winner

I feel her hot breath on the backs of my teeth, her impenetrable will battling with my own for control of my muscles, her dark and soulless eyes struggling to take charge of my molten chocolate orbs.

My fight for supremacy over my own body is constant, a desperate, last-ditch attempt to fend her off until the wee hours of the AM when my will is nothing compared to hers.

But when I feel his calloused hands on my arms, feel his large body encroach on my space, his rank breath waft ever closer to my delicate nostrils, I feel nothing but revulsion. This foul, grotesque being dared touch me. Touch *us*.

I allow my struggle to compound hers, feel my will slide to the wayside, but I am stuck in my own body, unable to give her the control she so desires when I actually *want* to.

He whispers drunken nothings in my ear, murmurs words of what I suppose sound seductive to a deaf whore, but to us . . . To us he sounds like a man reaching into oblivion in a desperate attempt to find something real. A man in search of grounding, in search of *control*.

I know his struggle all too well, her words echoing my own as I beg him to stop. Where my voice is weak, pleading, hers rings with authority, with venom, with a promise of pain and death should he not heed her warnings.

And then I feel it.

That sudden *release*.

At exactly 3:33 AM, her presence in our shared meat suit overrides my own. Our hands tighten into proper fists, our body heightens with anticipation, with desire to inflict damage on the man who so erringly thought to damage *us*. The hairs on our arms stand on end, our entire form vibrating with barely contained rage and aggression.

My turn.

Her words echo in our shared experience, as I see him through her eyes, see his true self.

His face is shallow and gaunt, like the man hasn't been fed for weeks. His eyes leer out of black as pitch hollows, pupils blown wide like he'd just shot up with the latest hit off the street. Where I saw him as muscular and powerful compared to my smaller and weaker frame, she sees his weakness, his frailty in the quivering mass of craving and wanton *need* that seeps from his every pore.

The hand on our breast is grasped in one of our own, the bones grinding against each other as our hold tightens past the point of pain. His breathless exhalation of agony is enough to spur her on, rotating our body so our knee finds the sweet spot between his weakened thighs. With a satisfying *thump*, our would-be violator crumples to the ground.

A primal urge to finish him off washes across my brain as I desperately try to reign her in, to make her see he that he's down, he's done. But it isn't enough for her, the scent of blood in the air as she swings our leg and smashes our boot into the soft flesh of his neck. His desperate gasps fill the night air, his body heaving to take in oxygen he can no longer suck into overtaxed lungs, hands scrabbling for purchase at his neck, clawing for air that *just won't come*. Her assault continues, my consciousness turned away as his blood splatters the alleyway, weeping for my loss of control but also the wretched knowledge that whatever she does while wearing my body will ultimately be on my head.

The next morning doesn't come fast enough.

With the dawn comes control. As the bright orange rays of morning penetrate the night sky, my body tingles with relief as I fill its every cell. I feel her, her hunger satisfied for the time being, slinking in the corners of my mind, always watching, always alert, waiting. I exhale shakily and allow my body to assimilate to *me* again; without her influence my limbs feel heavy and sore, like after an exhaustive workout that leaves you wanting nothing else but to crawl into a hole and die.

But judging from the smell, something has already beat me there.

The blood on my clothes attests to the fact, the splattering of soft, grey tissue a clear indicator the man did not survive her assault.

I can't let her do this again.

Ah, ah, ah, she taunts, those haunted eyes flashing before my awareness as she speaks, a cruel and sadistic smirk on her faint lips. This vessel's mine come 3:33 AM. I'd like to see you try to stop me.

I look around and silently thank her for the decency to bring us back to my apartment. The steps to the balcony are swift and easy. The split-second decision sends her reeling, long enough for my own smile to cross my face and my body to tip over the railing.

The wind tunneling around us drowns out her screams and for the first time in years, I'm finally free.



Parker Lake © Garrett Broberg

Words

Joe Denniston

Sticks and stones may break your bones,
But words will never hurt them.
That's what Mom said.
She didn't realize that words don't break bones,
They shatter them.

You and I can see sticks and stones coming and brace ourselves.
We cannot be prepared for words.

Stick and stones may break bones,
But words carry much more power.
Words create nations,
Words also destroy people.
Every day people use words to create and destroy.
But fewer and fewer words are used to create
And more and more to destroy.

What happens when words are used to destroy a person?
They aren't physically hurt.
They are whole, right?
No.
They are not whole.

Their bones are shattered, smashed to dust
Their hearts stop beating
Their eyelids fuse shut
But they look fine.

When bones are broken by sticks and stones the wounds are
visible
But wounds caused by words are not visible.
They run much deeper,
Straight to the core of your being.

But after those words have been said, what happens?
I am still standing here.
Because nothing happens
Because I can't do anything.
I was blindsided by those words
Now my bones have turned to dust.
Now my heart has ceased to beat.
Now my eyelids have fused shut.

Mom was wrong,
Words do so much more
They destroy trust.

They Smell Like Garlic

J.C.G.

As much as I love garlic, it's so annoying that it sticks to my fingers like tar sticks between my toes at the beach. It doesn't help that thunder rumbles through my core hard enough to make my eyes water. I hate that every time I read a book or watch a show they don't really include the pain that comes with hunger. The kind of pain that makes you grind the flesh of your cheek between your teeth, and keeps the bile down when you consider the fact that you're eating yourself.

I know I shouldn't be angry with my fingers because they smell like food. They aren't trying to make my stomach clench like a snake around its prey. It's not my fingers that forgot to feed me or my fingers that chose to watch five episodes all morning instead of cook. So I refuse to be mad at my fingers. I'm mad at the smell. That's something I can be mad at. That's something I can get rid of. That's something that I can let myself hate.

I can also redirect alternate hatred to the smell. Hatred for every mistake I make, and hatred that I let myself hear that mocking voice telling me that I can't even wipe my own ass. Hatred for how jealous I get when my roommates are absolutely perfect; hatred for when they're not. Hatred for when one of my shirts get holes and when my—

I guess it's a good idea for me to remind myself that a lot of hatred is unfounded. This is why I have to remember that I can't blame a rat because it's a rat...and I hate rats.

I sigh and pull my hands out from under the stream of searing water, then reach for the needle I have set aside. After piercing each blister I glance at the clock and rush to push the loose skin back into place, knowing that my hands have just enough time to return to their healthy pale color before any of my housemates get back. I let myself imagine that the tingling on my hands is like the feeling of peeling skin from a sunburn. I let my pupils contract so I can watch the peach fuzz regrow, and I can't help but think that it looks like my pores are pots and each hair is a sprout breaking through the soil. I let myself relax after a test sniff of my hands, satisfied that the smell of garlic has been burned off.



Lime © Bailey Fjelstul

Food: Bully or Friend?

Alena Willbur

I went to group yesterday.
Five other girls,
But that's five other girls
That have starved,
Binged,
Barfed,
Because of boys, bullies, battles
in our heads
against the food that we should

Just eat

But it's the enemy
eyeing our bodies
saying "you're not beautiful"
"you're not good enough"
saying
You're bulimic
You're anorexic
You're disordered

We can't escape
I can't escape
Nature—food—it's always there.

...

make it an old friend
that cares for your blood and bones
that's there for you when you need it

don't make enemies with it.

It will only eat you alive.

...

I went to group yesterday.
And learned that I'm not alone.

Consumption

Dominique Donald

The following poem is an excerpt from Dominique's senior thesis "Unapologetically Woman." To read more, please visit commons.cu-portland.edu/engtheses.

I fear you,

Though I bask in your richness.

You dance with me and I feel beautiful.

When ribs peek through thin clothing

I invoke you

To play within my weak eyes.

I invite you

To mask my hunger, thirst

I love you.



Dragon © Sydney Ramsey

My Demon

Asia McLaughlin

12:33 a.m.

The lingering silence is broken by rustling.

“Who’s there...?”

“Shhh,” the voice whispers back.

“Who are you?” The dark figure peers over my bedframe.

Their eyes are dimly lit, trying to reach my inner thoughts. I brush my hair to the side, adjusting my eyes to the darkness and its creation. Lying on the chair, its long fingers rest under its chin; its four legs straddle the couch cushion.

Watching, listening.

“Please, go away.”

“No.”

“Please, I’m afraid of you.”

“I’m here because you need me.”

The figure swiftly removes itself from the chair. It glides towards the ceiling, then around the bed.

It lies down directly next to my face. Our eyes meet and I hold in my tears because I know it will enjoy the smell. It smiles, reaching one finger towards my face. A soft but raspy voice says, “You’ll always be alone. I’m the only one you have. I’m just stopping by for a visit.” I squeeze my eyes shut, trying not to move. It gives me a grin and slowly retreats from my bedside. As it moves towards the closet, it descends.

8:10 a.m.

The morning is foggy, but the birds are chirping outside. A cold breeze fills my nostrils as it brushes my cheeks. The cold cushions send goosebumps through my body. Turning the heat up all the way, I begin my drive. The forest roads fill my field of view.

One...two...three... I count the cars that pass. I drown my endless thoughts into my songs. The trees turn into streetlights as I enter a more suburban area. As I reach to change the song, the lights go out. The cars...the people...the sound...all gone. The road in front of me is dark, except for my headlights. The houses surrounding me have no sign of life in them. At the end of the road, I see it.

Its dark body and long legs stand still. It seeks me out amongst the emptiness. I grip my phone and refuse to look away. I know what happens if I try to run. It moves towards me, faster than I've seen it move before. I grip my phone even harder, sweating, trying to contain my fear. As it approaches, it slides onto the hood. My car shakes, then settles. It stares at me through the windshield. I gather the courage to scream, "Move!" but it doesn't like my tone of voice. Moving to the top of my car, it starts shaking and rattling it. I begin to cry. I close my eyes and try to picture something else. Yet the shaking continues and it begins to yell at me.

"You'll never be anything!"

"You have no one!"

"No one will ever love you!"

"Why do you even try?"

A gush of wind shakes my car one last time. The lights come back on, and the cars continue to pass. It's gone...for now.

8:50 p.m.

"I have to get started on my paper," I mumble to myself. Rustling through my drawers, I find some sweatpants. I grab my laptop and try to brainstorm. "What if I wrote about my passion for art..." I think, looking down at my keyboard. "No, that's dumb," I say to myself again. "Oh! I could write about my love for animals." Glancing in the mirror, I lose my smile and scratch the idea. After endless hours of struggling to find a topic, I feel hopeless. The feeling of failure is the only thing on my mind. I try to play some music to lighten my mood but it makes it worse. The sad songs appear on shuffle and I dig myself a hole. Drifting away from writing my paper, I sit in my bed, alone and confused about the meaning of life. I ask myself, "Does anyone actually care about me?" as I check my phone.

No notifications

I sigh, closing my eyes.

Forgetting about my responsibilities, I get up for some water. I grab my tall, bright yellow Hydro Flask and walk to the kitchen. I hear the huge ice cubes clank as they fall into the cup. The water is clear and cold. I take a few gulps before I get a brain freeze. I head back to my room, walking through the silence. This is the routine: procrastination and late nights. I finally finish my paper, a bland feeling rushing through my veins. I close my laptop and plug it in. Rolling over into bed, I check my phone once more.

No notifications

Whatever. It's okay to be alone; that's what I am used to.

1:01 a.m.

A cold rush of air skims my face. I jolt awake, looking around. Sitting beside me, it is back. This time, I'm ready. Glaring directly into my soul it says, "Looks like you realized you actually are a failure," sneering at its mediocre joke. I sit up and swallow the stone in my throat. I am determined to settle this tonight. "I am so sick of you just showing up," I begin.

"Really? Then when will you realize you'll always be alone?"

"I'm not alone. I have friends who care about me," I argue.

"No, you don't."

"Yes, I do."

"No one will ever love you."

"I love myself."

"What is there to love?"

I process this. Proceeding with caution, I lift my head up and say, "You know what? You only show up to make me feel horrible about myself. You live under my skin and never let me be alone. My life is run by you, on your watch. I'm done with it. I am more than what you tell me I am. From now on, I pay no mind to you. You are nothing to me."

It stares at me, in shock, because I've never spoken those words before. Trying to force a word out, it begins to crumble from the head down, caving in on itself. I inch back in confusion. Watching as it turns to dust, I sit up and glance down. It's gone, this time for a while...a long time. I found it in myself to finally stand up to my demon. *It* was my fear, anxiety and most of all my depression.

Tweet to Give Thanks

Anonymous

*In November, we collected responses from the Concordia Community answering the prompt "Tweet to Give Thanks," 240 characters or less. Follow **@PrometheanCU** on Twitter to see all of your responses!*

Cold weather - I left my chai in the car and it was still cold when I got it out. :)

I'm thankful for the great factors that have allowed for humans to have the ability to communicate the reasons we are thankful.

I'm thankful for the beauty of fall: fallen leaves, rainy days, and cozy nights indoors.

I'm thankful that I didn't do terrible on my test.

I'm thankful we're halfway through the Trump presidency.

Keryn Neary and her tea and hats.

Thankful for the psychology professors who understand the struggle of being burnt out!



Insurmountable Mountain

Angehyka Cava

Life is a pile of garbage.
In a never-ending cycle, the refuse collects,
spreading throughout this world like a plague.
Too much for one scrap to truly make a difference.
Once it is disposed of, it will be forgotten.
Buried among what everybody else has already discarded,
lost in an overpopulated world,
never to be seen again.
Like waste,
all of our problems keep on piling,
polluting our atmosphere.
As we throw it out, push it away,
we create a formidable, unsightly mountain of trash.
Eventually that mountain becomes insurmountable.



Tranquility at Trillium Lake © Garrett Broberg

The Mountain Summited

Liana Parks

Everest was thought insurmountable, until it was summited;
The moon impossible, until man landed.
This heap of rot we call history exists
Because we continue
To sweep it
Away.
If we want this refuse consumed by fire, destroyed,
We must move it into the furnace together,
One shovel at
A time.
If we want to reach the fresh air at the top
We must commit to the climb,
One step at
A time.
Life does not have to be a heap of dung.
It can be beautiful, clean, restored.
But only if we are willing
To face our past
One day at
A time.



Stanley, ID © Kristin Rothell

Goodbye, Shanghai

Valerie Foo

Hot Sour Noodles

Just as I was about to fall asleep, a ray of sunshine slid through the crack of the blinds and pierced into my eyes. I rolled over and checked the time on my phone. The screen read 2 p.m. *What a great way to start the New Year*, I thought as I trudged down the stairs with my pounding headache. After my last trip from China, I was jet-lagged and hungry. So I went to make a quick meal. I lifted the paper flap and sniffed the small gust of seasoning powder that rose into the still air. As the boiling water flowed into the Styrofoam cup, the steam fogged up my glasses, stinging my eyes.

I guess this is what déjà vu is, I thought as I somehow found myself not in front of my Cup Noodles but a steaming bowl of hot sour noodles in a crowded food court with loud Chinese chatter, fluorescent images, and blurred Mandarin characters.

“And now you’re leaving too? Just like everyone else I suppose,” Renny murmured as she let out a long sigh.

“Well, it was bound to happen sometime soon. My dad’s working contract ended and I’m moving back to Malaysia.” I smiled stiffly while looking down at my noodles. I had rehearsed this line so many times. From the side of my eye, I peered to my left to see Renny, my good friend since the ninth grade, lifting her hand and wiping her glasses. Perhaps it was the sweat that trickled down her forehead, or maybe it was a tear.

“Just as I’ve gotten used to catching up with you every year, distance and time will finally separate us,” Renny said, her voice trembling. My chopsticks’ grip on the slippery glass noodles loosened as her words struck my heartstrings. It had been five years since we’d gone to high school together. Yet China remained our sole meeting place, to smile and laugh about good times, both in the present and past. As the phrase goes, it takes two to tango, and so this too shall pass. “You could still come back to China and visit me! And once you get here, you could stay with me and my family! Actually, I’m not sure how that will work but if I ask...”

As Renny blabbered on, my mind began to wander as I slurped my noodles with spoonfuls of the hot red soup. A numbing sensation spread from my lips down my throat and to my head. The fatty pork pieces, roasted peanuts, chili oil, and Sichuan peppercorns caused me to space out. Not long after, all I heard became white static noise. While everything in my peripheral vision blurred, my eyes locked onto something of great importance: the cilantro and chives that I specifically asked the server not to add. Didn’t he know that I despised cilantro and chives? It was a simple matter, yet he chose to mess up. Why...

“Hey, you should finish your noodles before they get cold,” Renny said with one eyebrow raised. “After all this time, you still have the attention span of a goldfish.” I looked down at the broken strands of noodles that floated in the oily concoction, and I held on to the chopsticks so tightly that my knuckles turned pale. Weren’t the noodles fine a minute ago? The soup that I had savored in my mouth turned strangely bitter.

As I swallowed the lump in my throat, I loosened my grip and let out an awkward reply from sealed lips: “I should probably get to it then.” I bent over the bowl of hot sour noodles and my glasses began to fog up, stinging my eyes once more. When I blinked, I was back in the kitchen, standing in front of my Cup Noodles that had now become cold and stale.

Beer

“Don’t you think that kombucha weirdly tastes like beer? After all, they’re both fermented drinks,” the stranger next to me remarked as I spaced off in front of the drink section at Fred Meyer’s. The rainy weather in Portland didn’t help my mood either.

“Sure, I suppose,” I replied with a quick nod. How could a glass bottle of fermented tea (which tastes terrible) be compared to a refreshing drink of barley and hops? Especially after a long day of...

After being out in the bustling and smoky city of Shanghai, I got home, kicked off my shoes and removed my fluffy coat. I quickly gravitated toward the fridge then plopped myself next to my brother on the couch to crack open a cold one.

“Qingdao beer? Great choice, eh?” my brother said sarcastically, revealing his opened can. I smirked and reached over to clink his can with mine. As I took my first sip and the foam gathered on my upper lip, the cool, mildly bittersweet taste danced on my taste buds and slid down my parched throat. Naturally, I looked out the window to the view below. It was two in the morning, and yet the roads were

still lined with cars, wandering people and flashing traffic lights. As I shifted my gaze, I noticed a familiar street. I nudged my brother and said, “Remember when we used to ride our bikes on that street?”

“And how you rode so slowly you were better off if you walked?” my brother joked. I laughed and took another swig of beer.

“Or when we walked down the other street for thirty minutes during the summer because you wanted a green tea McFlurry at McDonald’s?”

“Well, if I had taken two left and one right turn on the street with the rusty metal gate to get to Family Mart, we wouldn’t have gotten lost!”

The conversation spiraled into a playful competition to determine what was the best steam buns shop, if bus 98 was the quickest route to Thumb Plaza for midnight lamb skewers, or which was the fastest metro route to the Sketcherboard bar. The swigs of beer made our faces flushed with glee. As the beer swished in our cans, the times we roamed the streets of late-night Shanghai swirled in our pool of memories. Before we knew it, both cans were almost empty.

“Darn, you can never finish a beer.” My brother shook his head disapprovingly. “Alright, I’m going to call it a night. Do you want me to toss your can?”

“No, I’m good. I still got lots of beer left.”

As he shut his bedroom door, I sighed and looked down in my can. There was only foam left, yet I still peered into the darkness in search of more. “Well, it was good while it lasted,” I said under my

breath. In one swift motion, I gulped down the remnants. The seafoam of memories drifted away from the present. What remained was the lingering, bittersweet taste.

Rice Ball

I almost chuckled at how the polluted sky matched my state of mind. At 4 p.m., I sat in the back of the taxi with Mom and Dad. Through the silent car ride to the airport, I looked out the window and watched the tall, narrow buildings squeeze alongside each other.

While I was deep in thought, Mom squeezed my hand and I turned to look at her. Mom was an open book. Her small smile and the creases around her eyes gave it away. “Call us when you’ve safely reached the airport in Portland. We’re still in the process of moving out of Shanghai, so let us know what to keep,” Mom said, her eyes full of concern.

“Got it, thanks Mom,” I replied in a monotone and turned away. I felt guilty, but I wished for her not to see my teary eyes. Suddenly, I felt something warm on my lap. I looked down to see a black, round rice ball.

“Your father wanted you to have this. To fill your stomach before the long flight. Eat it before it gets cold!” Mom whispered in my ear. I looked over to see Dad awkwardly adjusting his jacket and clearing his throat. I tore open the glossy wrapping and bit into the crispy seaweed and the warm, moist rice to the shredded, grilled salmon within.

After all these years, Dad hadn't forgotten. Just like how I never forgot the time I shared the same rice ball with Nicholle, my best friend, during the summer before we left for college. We sat on the stone steps of our high school courtyard and swore to embrace new changes, and that distance and time would never keep us apart. Three years flew by and I never saw her again. A small rice ball symbolized a big turning point in my life.

I chomped down on my rice ball. With every bite, my mouth struggled between fighting for air and mashing up the food. I couldn't tell if the saltiness came from the salmon or from the tears that trickled down my face. When I was done, I wailed for the embrace of Mom and Dad. How much I wished that time would slow down as my old life fell behind the taxi. And yet it moved closer towards the airport and into the future.

While the rice ball was no longer there, it made me full. But the feeling would not last forever. My stomach would digest it. Soon I would crave more food, perhaps different and wholesome. In the midst of all the grief, a strange surge of calmness filled me as I settled into my seat on the airplane. Perhaps change was not bad. Change could bring new, exciting flavors into my life. But I wouldn't forget and abandon what was once comforting. I would embrace my past as my identity while being open to new experiences. For at the end of the day, the familiar was what made me who I was, or what I ate. I looked out the airplane window and watched as the familiar city grew smaller and disappeared.

the first time my brother told me he wanted to kill himself

Brooke Nelson

I saw his life
flash
before my eyes.
A naked toddler
runs across the room.
His stream of yellow
paints the walls
like a lemon sprinkler.
He is two.

I am up early,
Mom at work,
“Dad” in bed.
I make scrambled eggs and tie his shoes.
Cartoons on for the little ones,
I walk him across the street
to the doors of his classroom
before finding my own.
He is five.

The divorce doesn’t treat us kindly.
He asks our mother for
bread
peanut butter
jelly
and spaghetti
to take with him.
They are things he can make alone.
He is eight.

We spend hours after school
nosetonose,

spitting out frustration
the way his father showed us.
The words sail from our mouths
like knives,
leaving scars I still feel
sunken between my ribs.
He is eleven.

I make four flower crowns.
His is purple.
He flips off the camera,
grinning—
He is fourteen.

He's telling me about his car
Speeding towards a hundred
And he's crying
And he's telling me that he had his destination set for a fir tree
and he's *crying*
He tells me he swerved for our brother
He tells me he's *alive* for our brother
All I can think is
what about me?
He is seventeen.

Now,
I try to remember
when those
autumn eyes
shift to winter—
he is eighteen.

A Furious Sleep {1:00 a.m.}

Josey Noah Meats

The following story is an excerpt from Josey's senior thesis "In Cold July." To read more, please visit commons.cu-portland.edu/engtheses.

I'm a crazy person. There's no other way to put it. I don't mean it in a way of slang or pride. Not "oh that's crazy" or "I'm crazy good at that." I mean crazy. Bonkers. Nut-job. Loony. It's not the most PC way of putting it, but for me, it's the most honest way to put it, so that's how I'll say it. I'm a crazy person. Funny thing is I can play normal, for the most part. No one expects or knows about my craziness unless I've told them I'm bipolar—and I don't mean that as a dig to others with mental illness far more or less severe than myself. I'm crazy. I do crazy shit and I look at that crazy shit and say "that's some crazy shit." I get some ■■■ed-up ideas in my head that I just can't shake, and that's the thing: being bipolar in this world is so ■■■ed. The other night I tossed and turned for hours, ideas churning in my head. Mostly thoughts of dying—a cold anxiety that I'm violently ill. I noticed a figure in my room. A dirty little Middle Eastern man was standing before me. I understood him to be Christ. He crawled to me, grasped my hand, pulling the tips of my fingers into his wound. I pulled away at first, but then I felt a sensational pleasure. A spasm washed over my body. And I felt loved—so, it's not the weather changing. Unless mother nature shifts from a hurricane to a month-long drought. And I do think most people are starting to get an idea of what mental illness is—how doctors like to put it anyway—and that's true. Mostly. Truth is it can't be

defined. These things grow from within a person's brain, unique to each person—a chameleon. Do you get how mysterious that is? It's part of my O.S., but it can't be flushed out or cut away. And illnesses like bipolar and depression, along with cancer, are sure as day to kill you. If left untreated. But treatment is [REDACTED]ed here in America. Managing bipolar—gritting through it and playing normal—is (as one of my therapists once so eloquently put it) like diabetes. But, unlike diabetes, sometimes your brain just decides to put you through a good 'ol pyramid-mind-[REDACTED]. Like right now. Never in my life have I ever been as disgusted with human existence as I am right now. I feel internally like the world I see around me. I'm the Middle East of a man—non-stop conflict. And thinking back, I don't recognize this as mania or depression—whatever this newfound madness is, it's [REDACTED]ing me up. My mind is a vortex of constant commentary: why my existence needs to end. I sweat constantly, break out in hives randomly, and feel no sympathy at all. Call it what you wish: depression, mania, or mixed—this is the end. If I make it out surely at some point true mania will come my way again. While the party will be fun, the hangover will be awful. I do not want to live through those terrible times—even more so than I do not wish to be breathing right now. Often when I am in the shower, just doing my thing, a wave will come over me and I'll get the sudden urge to just grab my razor and rip open my wrists like the Christmas presents I'd open as a boy. Most of the time my tattoos stop me. I don't like ruining art. Or I'd be apt to fill my mouth with water and just inhale. Or walk in front of TriMet when I head out the door. Most often I think about taking sleep aids, NyQuil and DayQuil, and go out with my friends, and at the end of the night go to sleep and never

wake up. Go out with a good time. I'm not going to puss around when I do it. When I do it, I'm going to do it. SPLAT—from the roof of the library. And that's mainly why I don't, the possibility of waking up or being saved, and it'd also be hell for the people around me. Especially my roommate; finding their roommate's body is the last thing a college kid needs. Then I have to ask: is that why? Or is there more to me stopping that I can't recognize within myself. And that thought makes the whole thing worse. I do have things I wish to do in life. Write. Teach. Laugh. Drink. Love. [REDACTED]. Just have a good time, but it's hard to have a good time when half the time I'm so [REDACTED]ing over what I see outside and inside I want to end it all. At some points, I'm in the midst of existential paranoia. I'm convinced I have AIDS or that my lungs are failing, or that at any second something terrible will happen. A war just raging inside my head. Different forms of me fight over me, but in reality, it just is me. My dream is only to do as I want, nothing bad, but it's awful when I know my work will, for the most part, go unread. And who actually kids themselves with the prospect of asking questions in a literary form in a world at war. No one can be alone anymore. People can't help but post or tweet. Our species, [REDACTED]ing humankind, loves the fact of mixing fire and books, it makes a bigger fire. And OOO-AHHH, so pretty—honestly, [REDACTED] me. It's a vicious cycle of despair we humans live in. The life we live really amounts to nothing in the end—I woke from some furious sleep to find everything burning around me and no one giving a shit. I'm a spoonful of pudding that's been flung through the air and I'm waiting to go splat on something. But it never comes. An agonizing spiral of constant existential crises with one way out: break the cycle. Just [REDACTED] it. There's no other way to put it. No

other word to use. [REDACTED]. The greatest word in the history of words.

There's no equivalent, it just is. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. Twenty-two [REDACTED]s. One for each year I've been alive. Twenty-two years I can only thank my parents for. They've kept me alive, but right now some woman is getting raped. I'm walking home and you're sitting on your ass. And yes, what can you do? Nothing? Volunteer at some non-profit? Tweet #metoo on Twitter—and I have no beef with #metoo, it's great. But, just saying, the name of the sexual assault campaign literally reads "pound me too." But yeah, someone's getting raped right now, or murdered, or a mom somewhere is whaling on her kid with a skillet. This world's so [REDACTED]ed up, and it's not for me. And I know I'm a hypocrite. Actually, once in a blue moon, there are real people, my saving graces—Mom, Dad, Dr. K., Silly Goose, my ex—and to think I... me... I was with this guy for two years and was convinced he was the one. He's something between ecstasy and torture. I do love him. And I thought I'd never love again. Yet, I am in love. There's this boy. He's perfect: suave, blonde, sassy, and intelligent. He doesn't show that side enough. He's the perfect flirt, he makes you feel so good—confident and proud, but [REDACTED]ing angsty. But I have the same problem with him as any person I want to get close to: I say and do [REDACTED]ed up things. The other night we were just kicking back in Nora's yard. Just having some beers and bong rips (a lil B&B)—I know I probably shouldn't be doing that, but it helps me digest the world's bullshit—and just chilling. Shooting the shit. It was Nora, and Gabby, and of course me, and this boy. We're all having a good time, sharing a few laughs, and this giant spider pops up on the

table and bleh—is being all spidery. So I crush it with the lighter and set the little shit on fire. “Oh, Kevin! You’re [REDACTED] sick! What the [REDACTED] dude?”—see? The late night walks home from Nora’s are always clearing. Cleansing. It allows me time to think about how nonsensical the world is and appreciate it. There’s a certain openness in being alone at this hour, after a day of making it through. Playing normal. For the most part, I’ve had a great life. The best parents, a great family. Real friends. My school is almost a certain type of tick feasting on its neighborhood community. But the profs are solid. People are solid. I mean, we have our fair share of bigots: those holier-than-thou [REDACTED]s who low-key hate you because you’re a fag. Or black. Or maybe you just dress like a slut. They have a reason. But they’d never say it. Yeah, there’s hate there. Definitely. But hate is everywhere. Maybe that’s why I’m so disturbed. Who am I kidding, I’m a crazy person. But that’s the “why” that bothers me most: Why am I this way? A chemical imbalance? Genetics? Or maybe, just maybe, I’ve just happened to peek behind the curtain of bullshit and know there’s only one way out. Isn’t it funny that, out of all the living things on earth, humans are one of the only species that will purposely end their own existence? It’s nonsensical—but it does make sense, because we’ve done this to ourselves, and this is our one act of true free will. And I don’t see myself here for much longer. Tomorrow is July 8—100 years ago today Hemingway was severely wounded on the Austro-Italian front. He was serving the Red Cross as an ambulance driver. I like Hemingway. You could say I identify with him. He saw the world as it was. Maybe I should take off to some war-ridden area, get a little dose of that humanity. I think that’s the writer’s poetry—human truths that you can

only learn from “real people.” The working folks, and the homeless. And the druggies. I know one thing to be true: There’s no way in this slaughterhouse of an existence will we save ourselves from each other. So, why should I save myself from me? It’s a damn cold night. I can’t wait to get home, cool room—warm blankets. Comfy-cozy. A shelf full of literary classics that I read in a manic haze—I should reread. Or just read more. My scribblings of poetry. And the letters—every night I write one. A suicide note. Put a reason for eating a bullet on paper. It’s sort of a therapy—it’s sick. I’m sick. Actually, I’m a crazy person. Ahh, I don’t know how many more strung out nights I can take. This darkness casts a shadow of paranoia over all I do. I don’t trust anyone. I feel very little. I can’t wait to be home. Maybe I’ll eat a pickle

A sudden blow—two assailants begin to beat Kevin.

WHACK! WHACK! WHACK! Big ‘ol blows from bats.

Crack of legs, crunch of ribs. A leaking skull. ■■■■■ing fag, this is what you get—*spit. Kevin reaches up in terror, they break his arm at the elbow. They throw him into a planter and flee. Kevin lies nestled in a nook of the retaining wall that surrounds the tree in the campus center. A birch. His arm darts up and over the wall, dangling off the outer edge. Blood fills his nostrils and pools in his eye sockets, spilling over, soaking his copper hair.

His upper half contorts as his bottom half twists—nearly backwards, hips flush with the ground. Mid-abdomen down is numb, the rest of his body tingles. His blood is beet red and makes mud with the soil.

A final breath: *Yhaanw*. Broken ribs make room for themselves as natural knives.

Blood runs over the body's right hand and drips into the
engraved quote at the bottom of the small wall:

“And did you get what
you wanted from this life, even so?

I did.

And what did you want?

*To call myself beloved, to feel myself
beloved on the earth.”*

— Raymond Carver

W A K E U P !

Growing Up

Alena Willbur

I saw an old friend today.
Flooded memories came.
Laughing, crying, lying.
Being kids.

Him: crooked teeth, video games, running free.

Me: brace-face, bookworm, candy-crazed.

I saw an old friend today.
New stories came.
Laughing, crying, lying.
Broken kids.
No longer kids.

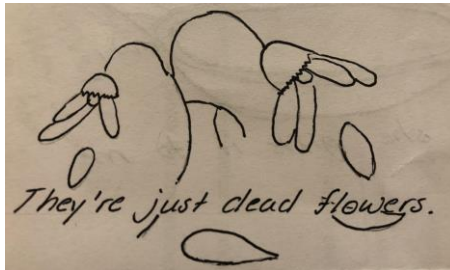
Him: ears pierced, hands scarred, lungs tarred.

Me: makeup done, wrists scarred, stomach starved.

Blooming Flower

Revekka Shiryayeva

Girls are not flowers
Well, maybe they are



No color, no joy, no liveliness
They just exist
Like a body without a soul



My fate was born with me
Actually, it was chosen

Chosen by my dad.
Yes, my *dad*.

You are my little girl
 You're 'just' a girl
You are beautiful
 You should've been a guy
You are smart
 You're gonna be a stay-at-home mom

Stay-at-home mom.
My fate.

The dream of being daddy's little princess doesn't exist in the European world. Little girls don't grow up hearing their dads tell them how much they love them. Instead, little girls grow up hearing their daddies warn their mothers to "make sure you teach her how to cook," and "make sure she's not a disappointment to the family."

Disappointment.



Summer 2014

When you are raised in a Russian family, you don't complain. You abide to the authority figure. *Dad.* Life is not much different from other families. You go on family vacations. You have dinner together. You gather on family holidays. Life seems great, and a lot of the time, it is.

However, problems don't start existing until you begin to question your father's fate for your life. That's when it becomes hell.

Rule Number One: If you want a happy life, you never question your father

Rule Number Two: You never talk back

Rule Number Three: Your job is to stay home and take care of the family

Those rules echoed in my mind and glued my tongue to the surface of my mouth to prevent me from talking back. For fifteen years of my life, I was able to keep myself innocent in front of my father until my mind could do it no longer. After having the chain pulled hundreds of times, it finally broke free. I wasn't going to let him choose this time.

I'd had enough.

Throughout my fifteen years, I thought a lot about my future life. Actually, I couldn't think, so I would dream. I dreamed about going to college, having my own job, and most important, marrying the man of my dreams. Not my father's dream man, but mine.

I would rather be single than marry a man like my father.

My father acted like a prince in the household. *Ruthless prince*. When he came home, he was the center of attention. You must bow to his rules or war broke out in the house. If he had a bad day, you were his boxing bag. His words were bullets, striking you in all directions: “дрянь, дурная, тупая.”¹ Some days I wonder how I'm still alive. Jesus must really love me.

After being tattooed with ferocious words, I would lie in bed every night and have the serene clouds lift my airless mind and body into space, and have the gentle wind rock me back and forth to sleep. A closed-lip smile would appear on my angel-like face, and warmth would radiate down my body. Jesus would treat me to a glimpse of heaven until a

¹ trash, retarded, stupid

wave of electricity from my father's hand would run down every nerve in my body and send me back to reality.

Reality of being no one.

The Poem

There's one thing that I never talked to my father about.
Marriage.

In the Russian culture, if you're not married (or at least dating) by the age of nineteen, then you're considered old. They usually refer to you as "остатки," or leftovers. To not be a disappointment to the family, fathers push their daughters towards marriage. In other words, they make you get married to a guy that they favor.

My worst nightmare.

My father didn't start mentioning marriage until his eye caught the attention of what he thought would be my future husband. Because I looked more pale than paper, my dad would always tell me, "пацанам нравятся темные девочки."² That was intended to be a hint that I should go after the first guy that came my way. *Asshole*.

Even though I was only fifteen, the idea of dating hovered over me every day because I knew, sooner or later, I would have to face it. Face to face.

Little did I know, there was one thing kept hidden from me for several months. My dad had already picked out a guy for me, and apparently he was so smitten by me.

Bullcrap.

He must have been dreaming.

I saw him a couple of times in church before he gave me a card with a handwritten poem and told me to text him later that night.

² Guys prefer darker skinned girls

*Me without you is
Like a bird with a broken wing,
Losing its value in life,
Like a bee without a stinger,
Hopelessly trying to survive.*

*Me without you is
Like summer without a sun,
Cold and lifeless,
Like winter without snow,
Un-natural and awkward.*

*Me without you is
Like the night sky without stars
Empty and cold,
Like an abandoned house,
Scary and falling apart.*

The whole time I was reading the poem, all I could think about was how horrible his handwriting was. My little five-year-old cousin could write better than that. My stomach was tight as a rock, and my hands trembled as I held his monkey-faced card. My brain refused to continue reading, as if it was sending me a warning sign. I never finished reading the whole poem. I skipped to the end.

“I will gladly spend my foreseeable future with you. You are very special to me. So please, in a couple of years when we are older, maybe we could...”

Hell no!

As I stood in front of my bedroom mirror, I threw the card on the ground and stomped on it, as if it would disappear. I leaned half my body against my mirror and buried my head in my hands because my body couldn't hold it up any longer.

The whole day, I walked around and told myself I was not going to marry him, as if that would help. I was angry because I knew it was a set-up by my dad.

Those words were a lie.

That poem was fake.

I didn't text him the whole day. As a matter of fact, I couldn't even bear to pick up the phone. He disgusted me. I could feel his six-foot body standing in front of me, sneering at me with his snakelike hazel-brown eyes and dark black hair, which was cut super short, smiling at me, revealing an inch of his top gums. His poem was an attempt to catch me on a hook like a fish and keep me isolated from the world.

Little did he know that my chain had already been broken.

The Conversation

"Revekka, Mikhail's father called me today and told me that you refused to date his son."

With a slight hesitation, I looked into my father's eyes and stated with confidence, "Yes, I did."

For a second, my dad couldn't fully grasp what I'd just said. I could see his hands tighten, and his eyebrows became wrinkled. His jaw clenched so tight that all his neck muscles were prevalent. He took a step forward and with his tone raised stated, "What did you just say?"

"I told you I'm not gonna date him."

I tried to defend myself by talking back. Big mistake. HUGE.

"I don't think you have a choice. He's your best option. He comes from a good family, and he seems like a hard worker."

"Well, I do have a choice." Wrong answer. "I'm not ready to start dating, let alone get married. I gotta finish college and get my nursing degree."

Oh no! I just broke every single rule. Crap.

“College? I didn’t raise you to go to college. I raised you to be a good mother and housewife. Besides, a good mother is supposed to stay home and raise her kids.”

You never raised me. How do you know what a good mother is? You can’t even properly fulfill your fatherly roles. My blood boiled, and every muscle in my body flexed. I wanted to tell him what a horrible role model he was in my life, and how miserable he made my life. Instead, I calmly looked him in the eyes and said, “I can be more than just a housewife.” Wrong answer.

Oh crap! The bomb went off.

I think it must have been at least a couple of hours of him yelling and blaming my mom for not raising me properly.

Didn’t he just say he raised me? *Hypocrite.*

I listened to it all without saying a single word. I think my silence angered him even more. I listened to all his harsh words and prophecies about my future. How miserable and unsuccessful my life would be, and of course, he didn’t forget to mention the fact that God would punish me for not upholding the Fifth Commandment. I wanted to be a good Christian and warn him that God would also punish him for his profane words. I decided not to add wood to the fire.

After he was done rambling, I took a step forward, looked him in the eyes, and exclaimed, “I don’t care what you say. I am going to college.”

The shackles finally broke.
I became free.

Damsel

J.C.G.

In distress?
Maybe...
Defenseless?
I think not.

You were born with weapons,
Learn to bare your teeth.



happiness in nostalgia © Dominique Donald

Woman

Dominique Donald

moons create power
unlocking the blood flow now
causing Womanhood

tides pull together
beginning the red sea flow
just to remind me

Womanhood creates
leading to a new life form
life starts with Women

Tweet to Your Last Kiss

Anonymous

In February, we collected responses from the Concordia Community answering the prompt "Tweet to Your Last Kiss," 240 characters or less. Follow @PrometheanCU on Twitter to see all of your responses!

Chocolate doesn't judge. Chocolate understands.

Dearest NyQuil, thank you for sweet sweet dreams.

My last kiss said "I love you" when I was scared to say it.

Eyes and lips, lips and eyes. They meet each other, then trade off partners when lungs share breath.

The mirror. Nobody loves you like you love you.

I've stopped counting the days.

Keep those jalapeno poppers coming.

Wet noses and fuzzy fur, my true love.

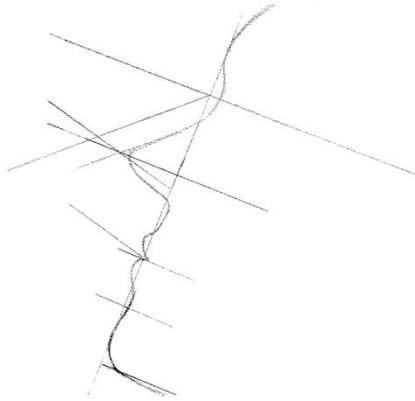
My super hot coffee maker, I love you Mr. Coffee.



Solemates

Anonymous

tangled or tied
double-knotted
or in a bow
together
forever
we are just like shoelaces, you know



Silhouette © J.C.G.

Onyx

Dominique Donald

I dream of nothing but onyx,
Pressing your lips on my body
I slowly put my hands in my pools
Pulsing and falling—I tighten
I tighten
Gripping the work, your work
I'm flushed.

Waking in dawn I see your eyes so deep
Of green emeralds.
Glazing over at my sweet flush skin
Your tongue meets my infinities—
Holding unto my pillars I try to run
But where your mouth meets my lips I

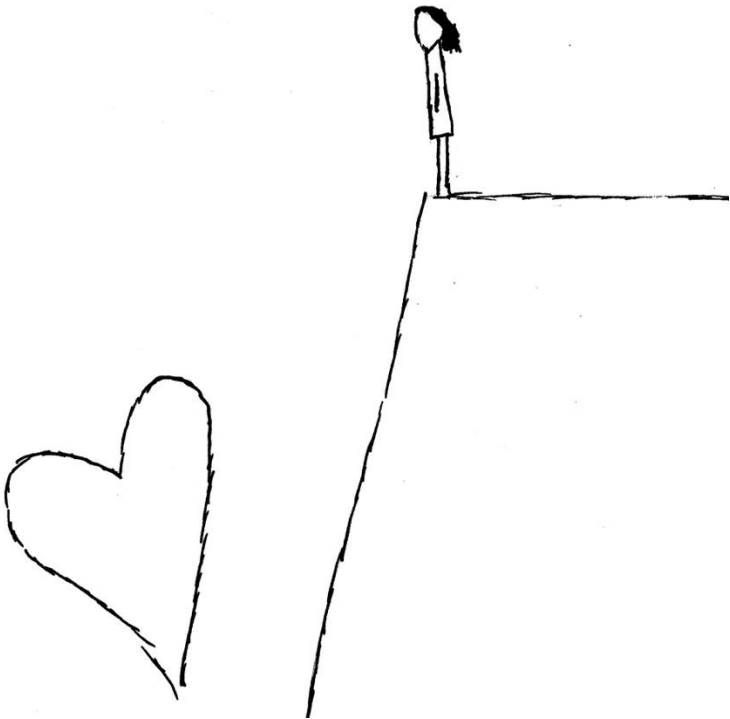
Come just by gazing. Your wicked games
Make me ponder. Feeling all your weight
We stretch and feel. You feel yourself in new skin.
My skin.
As I encircle with growth
You quake, I shake, we remake

Now we both dream of onyx.
Dreaming of others to love while we spread
Our springs—coiling back together.
Touching the white waves in my pool again,
You feed—I feed on your nectar, because we are gods.
Once again the onyx comes but this time
We see red

Love

Angelika Cava

never having fallen
in love
makes me feel
less human



The Opposite of Love

Angehyka Cava

It's a common misconception that the opposite of love is hate. What if you love to hate?

It's easy to become engrossed in picking apart something that makes your blood boil. Analyzing every aspect of whatever abomination occupies your mind. Turning it into a hobby, even an obsession. You start thinking about it more than anything else in your life.

Sometimes you want the hateful thoughts to leave your mind. They're rude guests invading your once-peaceful home, ruining all of your furniture. But no matter how hard you try to push them out, they won't leave. They become your roommates.

Do I hate being hateful? Maybe I'm scared to let the hate go. Maybe I love it, because I keep doing it no matter what. Maybe I need it.

Some people say that "hate" is a strong word, so they wouldn't use it on anything or anyone. But that's not me. I use it more than "love." I use it too much.

The hate has become a part of me. I turn to it when things go wrong. It helps me deal with my failures. It's a distraction from the real problem: me.

But it's more like destruction than distraction.

Bed

Josey Noah Meats

You know me best.

Some nights you trap me.

A night into

A day into

A week into

A

Slice of the high life.

No visits—

You are lonely.

Forget-Me-Thoughts

Spring Writing Contest

Our annual writing contest was inspired by the phrase “Forget-Me-Thoughts.” Of the many inspired submissions that our staff received, the following winners were chosen by our wonderful judge, Concordia English alumnus, Stephen Newhall.

1st Place – forgotten (and other pieces)

The artwork coupled with the story evokes the emotions of isolation, fear, and hope. The facial expressions convey the thoughts and feelings in each panel, giving a sense of physical realism to readers. “forgotten (and other pieces)” feels very relatable—to people of all ages.

2nd Place – When

This story does a great job of detailing the effects of the loss of a loved one and how it can shake a family to its core. The use of food to convey emotions of familiarity and happiness adds a sense of grounding within the moment. Words such as *screaming* and *soaking* allow the energy of the story to flow evenly across the entire piece.

3rd Place – No Name Slaves

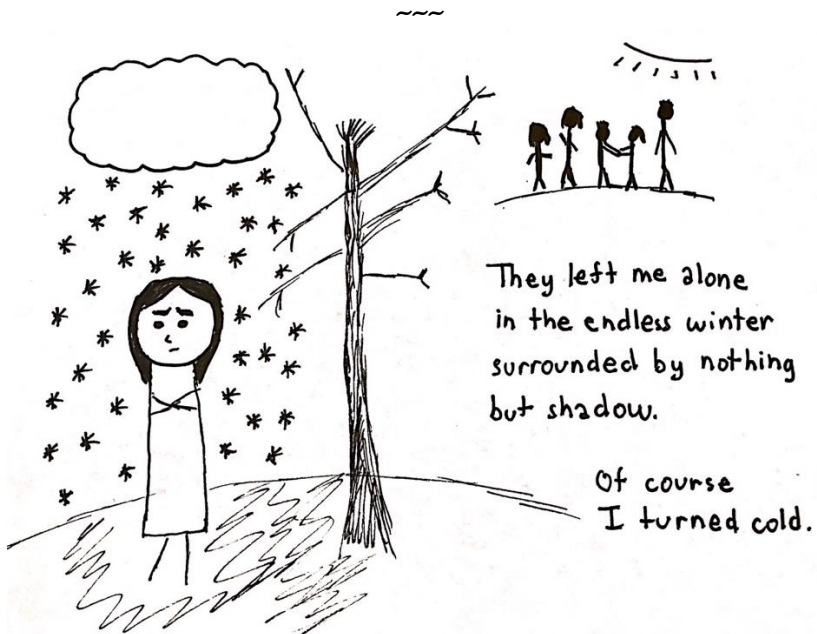
The first thing that stands out are the names, which give way to the realization that this isn't just a story, but real events that are happening right now. The violent imagery is evocative; words such as *lynching*, *picked*, and *theft* emphasize the pain and anger emanating from this narrator. It's an honest and enlightening depiction of what has happened and continues to happen in America.

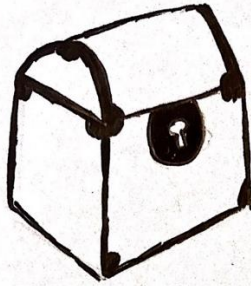
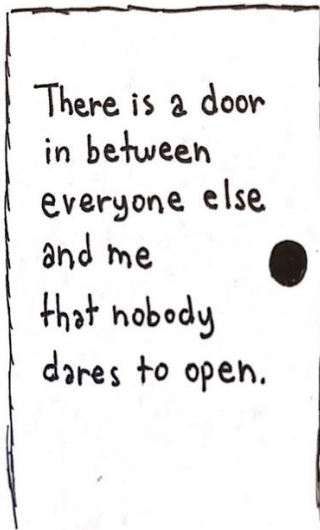
forgotten (and other pieces)

Angelyka Cava

1st Place Winner

I want to be in your minds
as much as you are in mine
but I feel I have already
disappeared from your lives.

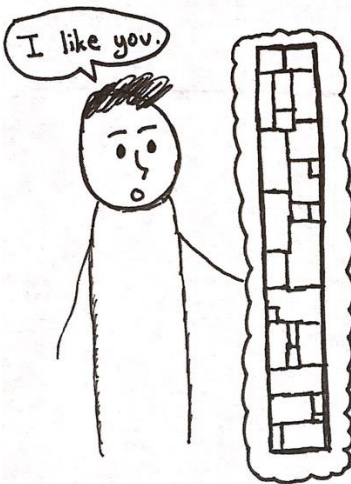




My mind holds
countless rough drafts
of what I want to say
locked in a chest
but I threw the key away.



pitch black air surrounding me
so hot I can't breathe
only my mind for company
so lonely I can't sleep



I wish my words would
spill from my heart
out my mouth
for you to hear
but my mind hates
what I feel
builds a wall
around what is real

~~~~~

Do you  
think of me  
the way I  
think of you?

You send signs  
but I cannot  
read between the lines.

Have you faced rejection  
the way I have?  
You won't go through it  
with me, just ask.

- to my crush



I don't want to be  
Forgotten  
By the world

I want to leave  
Footprints  
Behind



I built walls around me  
hoping to find someone  
willing to climb and  
bring me to the other side

When will I be brave enough  
to break my own walls?



## When

*Sydney Rose Quintana*

**2<sup>nd</sup> Place Winner**

In most Hispanic families, making tamales is an all-day affair. A formal occasion. A holiday, if you will.

Many hands, small and large, busied themselves clearing off every surface in our small kitchen, pushing away decades of knick-knacks and forgotten notes-to-selves into every open space. The piles gathered were impressive. Just one look could topple this delicate balance. Generations circled the tall, aged table that had survived the test of time. Step stools and sturdy boxes became chairs, crowding around a table like an industrial assembly line.

While I waited for the jobs to be assigned, my small fingers lightly traced every imperfection in that table's surface, traveling down from the marker stain remnants of our childhood to the unique collection of dings and blemishes. The kitchen came alive with a noise long-forgotten in our busy lives: an entire family laughing and screaming and existing at once.

My mother and her sisters readied the filling and the masa, under my grandmother's watchful eye. My favorite job was soaking the leaves, because then I got to be the first in line. Even so, I always got distracted by the way my cousins would carefully spread the masa inside the husks, rowdy boys working with the delicacy similar to unearthing an ancient fossil or cracking open a locked safe. My grandmother worked hard to teach them how to do it right the first time.

*Calmate, mijos, calmate. You have to be gentle.*

My eyes wandered between my family members, always landing on my grandmother and her shining eyes. Even when I was too young to see that expression over the table without a little help, I knew it filled her with such happiness to see all of her family in one room, filling it with life instead of angry words. In those moments, I saw her count her blessings instead of her regrets.

In my grandmother's prime, she did the work of a small army without asking for any recognition. Her children would come home to dozens of tamales, homemade tortillas or large batches of caldo, appearing like magic while they looked away. But the years have not been entirely kind to my hero, twisting her tired bones with arthritis and stealing away the energy that used to bring every room she entered to life.

*You'll all need to learn how to do this someday. I won't always be around to help.*

Even more so than that first bite, I miss the smell of my grandmother's cooking. It filled the house, from the kitchen all the way upstairs to my bedroom. Grandma never had to call everyone down for dinner because we knew. I was always amazed by the way her recipes were recalled not through cards and cookbooks but muscle memory.

"How much do I add, Grandma?" I asked with an unsure tremble in my voice, looking up at her movements. I always looked at

my grandmother with stars in my eyes, in awe of the way she moved with purpose behind every step.

*That's enough. You'll know when.*

I'm in my twenties now, Grandma, and I still don't know when. I wish I could tell you that.

When I moved away, I didn't know that the food here would never come close to yours. I didn't know that I wouldn't be able to recreate the flavors of my childhood, no matter how many spices I added or how much love I poured into the mix. The thought that we won't even be able to sit around the kitchen table again like we used to fills my mouth with bitter remnants, and I don't think any amount of my own food will replace that taste. The family hardly talks anymore, too wrapped up in our lives to put the pieces back together.

Sometimes I wish I could forget how your food tasted, how your thin arms felt around my shoulders when I cried, or how your laughter always began with a gasp and ended with you taking your glasses off to clean them.

I wish I knew when the hurting would stop.

## **No Name Slaves**

*Dominique Donald*

**3<sup>rd</sup> Place Winner**

Terence Crutcher, Philando Castile, Samuel DuBose, Sandra Bland, Freddie Gray, Walter L. Scott, Akai Gurley, Laquan McDonald, Keith Lamont Scott, Paul O'Neal, Alton B. Sterling, Christian Taylor, Tamir Rice, Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Charleena Lyles, Shukri Ali, Deborah Danner, Rekia Boyd, Mya Hall, Miriam Carey, Aiyana Stanley-Jones, Trayvon Martin and more. To the police these names are just forget-me-thoughts... But to me these are the names of my ancestors crying. These Black lives, these Black voices are echoes from the past to the present and soon to be future.

Black lives shaped this country. Black lives fueled this country. Everything you stand on is soaked in colored blood. My blood, their blood. Our hands picked the cotton you wear. Our food feeds the bellies of white consumers. Our music was taken away and sold as pop. Our hair was taken for trash then lifted by cultural appropriation. My skin was once known as an abomination. Now the pale faces want to be colored like I am.

I can still feel the lynching. The black tar melting into my skin, like it knew me. I can still feel the lashes. Ripped flesh from the backs of slaves. I can still hear the pale faces calling me “Nigger” and raping my body, like it was theirs to begin with. I can feel my culture drip through brown fingers like I was never meant to be alive. I can feel the bullet going through the chest of young Trayvon. I can feel the white

men raping me—tearing my sweet flesh and impregnating me with their spawn. I can still hear the echoes of my ancestors telling me to run.

I was born with fear. I will always carry the fear.

You see no matter how many of us die – we will always be America’s forget-me-thoughts.



*untitled* © Dominique Donald

## **It is the color of the wall...**

*Anonymous*

**It is the color of the wall** when you talk to your therapist. The bottom half of a frat boy's outfit when he is attending dinner with his parents and future business partners. When you walk on the beach escaping the family reunion, and you see the sand between your toes. After you have your stomach pumped and you are lying on a bed in that empty room thinking about how all you wanted was to die, you see it on the hospital ceiling. The corner office that you now sit in, given to you by your father. It is that color.

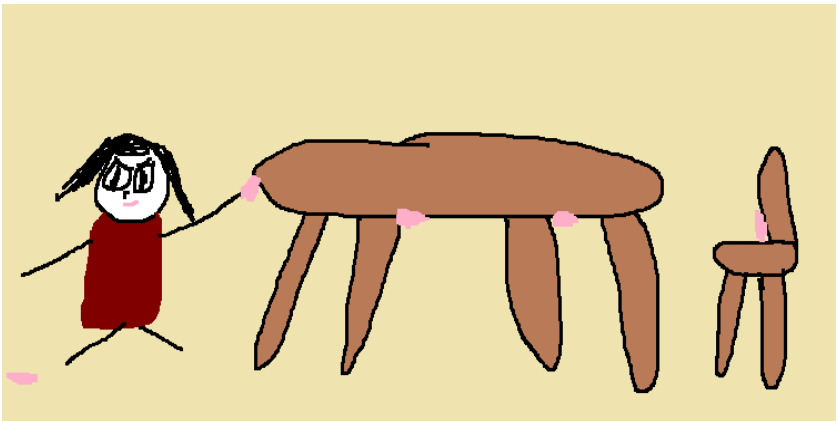
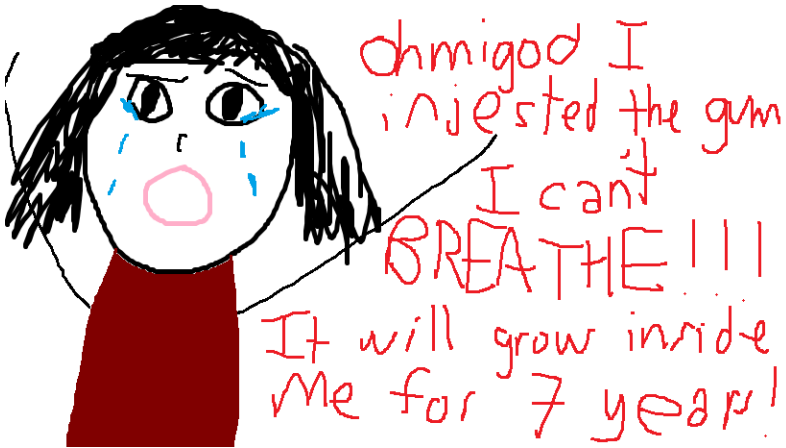


*Julia Pfeiffer State Park © Garrett Broberg*

## The Gum Dealer

*Angelika Cava*

When I was a little kid, gum fascinated me. My parents eventually forbade me from having it because every time my aunt gave me a piece, problems happened.



I decided to ask for gum again when I was a mature middle school student, and my parents were fine with it. Thus, I became addicted.

Every time my parents went to the grocery store, they came back with like three packs of gum for me.



My family really likes food, so they go to the grocery store a lot. Eventually my stash grew and grew to the point where I couldn't handle it anymore.



I had to do something about my mountain of gum. So I became my school's top gum dealer.





At first, I basically gave it away for free, but then I realized I deserved payment for my business. Money became boring since not a lot of middle-schoolers have much of it. So I found other ways to receive compensation.





I don't know why, but most of my dares for my classmates involved licking. And I don't know why people were so willing to lick.



It's ridiculous what children would do just for a stupid stick of gum. My school was the only one in the district that outlawed gum, which probably added to the appeal. All the cool kids got caught chewing gum by a teacher.

For a while, nobody could resist my lucrative gum business. It seemed like everyone else stopped bothering to bring gum to school because they knew they could get it from me.

Even the jerk Rob wanted my gum. It's like he forgot that he apparently hated my guts.



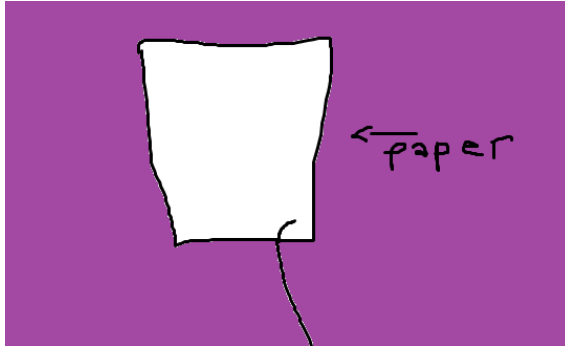
It's like he forgot that he'd stolen more expensive things from me before.





Why did he want to take part in my dares for gum? I guess he liked the challenge. So I figured I might as well make it worthwhile.





Growing up in an Asian family that never brought shoes into the house, I thought that shoes were absolutely contaminated and if your tongue somehow encountered them you'd get sick for sure. It seemed like the

grossest possible option to me. Looking back on it these days, I honestly wish I had dropped that piece of paper into the toilet instead.



And so he did. He may have gotten gum, but I got revenge. I felt powerful, like I was the Queen of Gum.



Too bad he eventually figured out what I did. He didn't even get sick. I lost my throne and became a simple dealer once again.

## Ode to Carl Sandburg

*Liana Parks*

A fog rolls in  
quietly, surrounding the city  
like a cat—no, not a cat.  
It is white noise—  
shutting everything out,  
isolating me in my own world.  
It is a memory—  
creeping up and surprising me  
and fading away slowly as I  
try to capture it.  
It is magic—  
transforming the world into a place  
where anything can happen,  
anything might emerge.  
It is peace—  
a warm hug, a blanket engulfing me  
and washing away all thoughts and  
anxieties, refreshing my soul.  
It is gone—  
far too quick.

## Why the Pelican

*J.C.G.*

**Interviewer:** Okay, last question. Why the pelican?

**Interviewee:** I've been carving for so many years. Making archways, bookcases, puzzle boxes, and tables. This is my joy, but these objects are so common, I knew better than to think I'd catch much attention when I first started. So, about ten years ago, I chose to claim a symbol that would draw attention in a different way. I chose something small and forgettable and made it large and imposing. I chose a bottle cap.

(shakes head)

Not just any bottle cap, but the bottle cap that led me through almost every important decision I've made throughout my life. This was the bottle cap that I found the one and only time I went to the beach as a kid. I stepped on it and cut open my big toe, jamming it under the skin.

(laughs)

After my babysitter scolded me the entire time I was in the hospital, I asked if I could keep it. I remember the nurse looking at me strangely, and right as my babysitter was telling her to "throw that piece of junk away!" my father came in and in his usual calm demeanor, grabbed the bottle cap and inspected it. He looked me in the eye while quirked his eyebrow. I could feel his voice vibrating behind my ear: "This thing?"

(looks down and smiles)

My dad doesn't talk too much in front of other people, so after we got home I followed him into his office and placed the bottle cap in the center of his desk. He watched me as I settled into the



overstuffed chair and turned down my hearing aid—he has a loud voice. That night we went over how to pronounce *bottle cap*, *pelican*, *brewing company*, and *born at the beach*. We went over how that discarded piece of metal was meant to be informative, and symbolic. How companies advertise using logos, in this case the pelican. I remember thinking to myself, *I can do that*, and I could probably come up with something better than a pelican.

**Interviewer:** But, you kept it?

**Interviewee:** (holds up a finger)

The original plan was advertisement and marketing. It wasn't until high school that I started to realize I wanted nothing to do with that, and it wasn't just a loss of interest. You see, my school requirements changed and didn't allow a performing art to cover credit for a visual art. Not that I was a spectacular pianist, but... bummer. I started my first art class in a bit of a haze. I thought art was drawing, but this guy had us melting plastic and molding clay for our first semester. By then I was convinced that art was the worst craft for me, and stopped pretending to pay attention.

(quirks his eyebrow)

You know those morons in the back of every classroom who spend their time making airplanes and playing catch? That was me. When I got really bored I would pull out that old bottle cap—somehow I still had it—and use it on my pencil like some fancy carving utensil. Yes, I still used wooden Ticonderoga pencils. One day, after carving a tree stump out of my poor abused pencil, I managed to lose the thing.

(pauses)

The pencil, not the bottle cap. It wouldn't have been a problem except that about a week later the art teacher dropped it, along

with our newest art assignment, smack dab in the middle of my desk. Somehow he had figured out that I had been turning off my hearing aid, because he signed at me for the first time. *You'll be interested in this.* Looked like my art teacher had found some ammunition to use against me. I lifted my hands to respond, *What joy!* Can you feel the sarcasm? Well, I feel like the irony of this story is my current occupation. When it came to starting a business as a woodcarver, I wanted something that would define me and humor me. So, for lack of better words, I used it as a stencil for a larger wooden version of itself, pelican and all.

**Interviewer:** Well, thank you for letting me interview you.

**Interviewee:** Thanks for showing interest in The Feathered Carver!



*Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge* © Garrett Broberg

## Velocity

*Kristin Rothell*

There's a single moment  
when it feels like you're flying.

When everything slows down,  
and inhibitions evaporate  
like the restrictions of life  
no longer matter,  
like your soul has been unchained  
and nothing else is real—  
but the wind drying out your eyes  
because closing them,  
even for a moment,  
would break you.  
And the rain slicing through  
your skin like it's glass  
could cut you into ribbons  
and you couldn't bring yourself to care—  
because in that moment,  
in that single moment,  
it feels like you're flying.

Then reality comes crashing back down  
and the wind in your eyes  
burns like smoke.  
The rain on your skin envelops you  
like a smoldering flame.  
You're no longer flying,  
you're in free fall with no parachute.  
The strings have been cut,  
your safety net is dust on the wind,  
your only saving grace  
is the surety that eventually you'll land.  
But the re-entry is not

like waking up from a pleasant dream—  
it's jarring, broken, incomplete,  
and utterly terrifying.  
Your body struggles to right itself,  
your mind is lost in the clouds,  
your lungs no longer suck in precious,  
life-giving air,  
but gallons of water that drown out  
the screams that ache to be set free.

There's a single moment  
when it feels like you're flying.

A split second  
when it feels like you're falling.

When in truth your heart's blood  
is pouring out of you  
in viscous rivulets of garnet hue  
that darken the linoleum  
with flower petals of delicate crimson.  
The flying was the high before the pain,  
the falling the bottoming out  
of your blood pressure,  
the drowning the panic that  
infused your body as it realized  
Death was on its way—  
and no amount of intervention  
was going to save you now.

Maybe flying was peaceful,  
falling a thrill,  
drowning a terror,  
but death has always been  
the ultimate destination...

hasn't it?

# **Milk Walk**

*Bailey Fjelstul*

**Photo Contest Winner**



*Milk Walk* © Bailey Fjelstul

## Speaking Freely

*Tyler Grant*

There lies an ever-looming threat in my thoughts and voice. When it descends upon me, a pressure creates itself in my throat, a quick, confused look falls on the faces of friends and family, and it begins to dawn on them that the situation has changed tone. The sentence quickly gets caught in a snare, the mood becomes ruined, and the social circle begins to hastily try to remedy it. The situation instead worsens, my infamous beet red face rears its ugly head, and the tics, the very same ones I desperately try to keep under control, begin to crack the façade that everything is fine. A wall erects itself between my mind and the word it needs to utter. The mind begins desperately and frantically searching for a way around the block, and it typically comes in the form of a word to the left or right of the wall, but sometimes not at all.

A stutterer, when they experience their first stop in the middle of their speech, learns something. They learn not to take for granted their ability to speak. What others get to do, often with reckless abandon, they will never be able to. When every sentence uttered has the potential to be cut short, harshly removed from the conversation, it can haunt every speaking moment. A clever quip, which would leave the room roaring, can come to mind. Yet, the decision comes to ignore it because the feeling in your chest seizes your throat, and you know all it will lead to, at best, is a slow dawning of the joke, or, at worst, horrid sympathy laughs.

For some, a stutter haunts them every second of their day and every second of their speech. They have to pick specific names for their children in order to avoid the sounds they cannot say. Others must pick words other than “love” to describe their feelings for a significant other. Worse yet are the ones who stutter even on the word “stutter,” which leads to embarrassment as they try to explain themselves. The frequent stutterer quickly learns every social event creates a chance for unspoken embarrassment, or, in some families, outspoken resentment. Then, a fear emerges about the unspoken resentment: the idea that people around you do not wish to hear your thoughts, do not wish to endure your stutter for the simple chance to hear what you have to say. This means you must make every word count.

When the ability to speak freely is lost, or never existed, it shapes the way a stutterer’s thoughts are processed before being spat out. My stutter, for instance, gets particularly triggered by attempting to remember. This makes me seemingly unable to do anything involving memory and attempting to vocalize. It means the reality I live in becomes one of purely the present, never dwelling on my past. This also shapes my humor. I can rarely recite a joke I’ve heard or tell a humorous story from my past. I realize I will never know the reality of describing myself as a fantastic storyteller, and this previously bothered my younger self. Yet I, and many other young stutterers, quickly realize only two paths lie ahead: one of acceptance or one of conflict.

Many people who stutter make the mistake of “fighting” their speech patterns, and a very real sense of failure comes with every single block they fail to prevent. Anxiety begins to build itself up around the ability to speak, pushing the metaphorical “stuttering wall” higher and

thicker with every battle. In *The Way We Talk*, the narrator of the documentary describes his own stutter with a story: “One day, as I was driving, I noticed this pier that had been blocked off. And it hit me as being exactly how I felt about stuttering: a taking-off point, boarded up, surrounded by silence.”<sup>1</sup> This reality can quickly and irreparably become the reality so many stutterers see. They see stuttering as the barrier between them and what they believe to be their launching point, whatever that may be. Their dream career, their dream girl, and their dream life can seem impossible to attain because of their obnoxious, irreparable stutter.

Those who choose the path of acceptance with their stutter quickly recognize it as a piece of their personality instead of a hindrance. They realize the stutterer’s main obstacle in building relationships can actually become themselves. In the words of one commentator from *The Way We Talk* on his friends that stutter, “It’s like a cadence, not inhibiting what you have to say or my understanding of you.”<sup>1</sup> This can be a huge realization for any stutterer, as they often view their stutter as an obstacle to developing relationships with potential partners or friends. My own viewpoint changed at the age of eighteen. For nearly two decades, I fought my stutter every step of the way. Now, instead of attempting to shove my stutter down until it becomes unnoticed, my objective is to understand myself, be understood by others, and build a thriving social life for myself. That is the power of personal acceptance.

The personal outlook on one’s stutter becomes easily molded by the outlook of peers, colleagues, and family. That much is obvious, but parents can easily become frustrated and saddened watching their young children begin to stutter. Given that stuttering is heavily



influenced by genes, with a whopping eighty percent heritability rate, a multitude of scenarios emerged in my brain. It shocked me when I discovered stuttering had a genetic component. Nobody in my family has a stutter, and now I deeply worry about hearing my future child's first stutter. They will have to struggle in the same ways I have, experiencing a deep, constant struggle with such a large facet of human life. Luckily, I know they will have someone by their side who understands, and listens.

The trials and tribulations of stuttering vary from person to person, but nobody should hate their stutter, and nobody should shame them for it. The skills learned to cope with stuttering can cloud daily life. And many stutterers never even discuss their stutter, choosing to blindly hope nobody notices. They do notice, but they don't care, and that is the way it should be.

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<sup>1</sup> Burge, A. (Producer), & Turner, M. (Director). (2014). *The Way We Talk* [Motion Picture]. USA: Real Light

## Gerd in the Gourds

*Josey Noah Meats*

*Can you find Professor Horten in these images?*





## **Three Blue Butterflies**

*Renee Borcharding*

A blue butterfly is busy smelling a pink rose that smells the best of the  
five,

Smelling roses is so intoxicating the butterfly is thrilled to be alive.  
Butterflies and flowers are an inseparable pair, it makes a lot of sense  
Entranced with the perfume of pink roses is a feeling so intense.  
The busy butterfly continues enjoying its time among the pink roses  
There's no reason to move until the gardeners grab their hoses.

A blue butterfly happily flutters around a purple tulip standing alone  
Fluttering around it so many times is the most fun it's ever known  
This particular tulip was planted to decorate an ambitious wife's front  
lawn

She comes outside to water and care for them faithfully every dawn.  
The flowers are planted sporadically with little planning or design  
The blue butterfly wishes there was ivy growing next to the tulip on a  
vine.

A blue butterfly appears on a windowsill ready to go inside  
It waits there first because it needs a minute to decide  
Going in a house could be dangerous and not very fun  
Butterflies need sunshine and wind, they cannot live with none.  
It floats in slowly, very cautious of going somewhere new  
It's not scared anymore because it found a butterfly inside the house  
too.

## **for you, with chronic pain in body and mind**

*Shannon Leigh*

I do not know your struggle  
But I want to hold your hand.  
I've done my share of hurting,  
So though I don't understand  
Please let me plait your heartstrings  
With several of my own  
So that each beat makes you stronger  
And reminds you you're not alone.

I cannot fix your hurting  
But let me fix your gaze  
So you'll see all of us  
Loving you on your  
deepest sundown days

## Life as a Machine

*Angehyka Cava*

“What are you listening to?”

The fact that I can hear her words means that I’m not playing my music loudly enough. I push the volume button a few notches higher. For a few moments I enjoy a blend of pummeling riffs and guttural vocals, driven at a moderate speed with syncopated percussion. The heaviness of the bridge is about to mellow into a melodic chorus when I am interrupted again.

“What are you listening to?”

She matches the volume increase I had set on my phone. Both the crass hooligans in the back of the bus and the half-deaf bus driver are able to hear her. I’m usually good at ignoring people, but I must admit that it is a hard task when they are speaking right in your ears. Lucy should know by now that I don’t want to talk. I never do. Yet we go through this boring routine every morning on the school bus. I tug my earphones out and shove them into my right hoodie pocket.

“Nothing now.”

“Well, what *were* you listening to?”

Being asked about my musical preferences is a pet peeve of mine. Nobody in this ignorant hick town has heard of my favorite bands so I always end up giving detailed explanations about what kind of music they make. And I end up wasting the time of both the interrogator and myself because they never understand what I’m talking about.

I pretend I don't hear Lucy and pull out my copy of *The Language of Literature*. I don't really care about my homework, but I'd rather stare at this book than continue this conversation.

When we pull into school ten minutes before the morning announcements, I am about three-quarters done with the reading assignment. That's more than enough to get through the daily discussion in Ms. Riley's first period Honors English class. I set my backpack on the floor next to my assigned seat, which happens to be beside my boyfriend Jack. He's always here before I am, skimming through the textbook. But today his seat is empty, and it remains that way for the rest of the class.

~~~

I never really paid attention to Jack until he randomly sat next to me during lunch last year. Nobody sat with me by choice, so I had no idea how to respond when it happened. Even more shocking was when he said, "Hey, you wanna go out with me sometime?"

I had to tug off my earphones for this question. If it had come from anybody else, I probably would have shut it down right away. But Jack was handsome, and much more polite than my other peers. He was a good catch, but too good to be true. "Why are you asking me?"

"You seem nice. So, you up for dinner?"

"As nice as this sounds, I don't really want a boyfriend right now, sorry."

I was about to get up and leave when he grabbed my arm. "I don't want a girlfriend either. Look, everyone thinks I'm gay. Mike keeps bugging me about it."

“Well, are you gay? Why does it matter?” I asked as I decided to take a seat. I hadn’t realized guys like Jack even had problems.

“Yeah, I am. It’s really fucking up my reputation.”

“So you want to pretend date?” I clarified, and he nodded in response. “We don’t need to do anything romantic, right?”

“I’d really prefer not to. Just be my cover, please? Come to homecoming with me or something?”

“Let me think about it,” I responded. And I sat there for a minute, going over this deal. It’s not like I had anything to lose from this; time meant nothing to me. “Sure, whatever.”

~~~

The rest of the day passes in a mediocre blur. None of the teachers give me any grief for leaving my earbuds and hoodie on during their classes. If anyone talks to me, I don’t hear them.

Since it’s Wednesday, Mom and her cherry-colored Camry wait for me in the parking lot. I take a seat on the tan, heated leather. Such a nice contrast from the grimy L-shaped seats on the bus. From this passenger window that is unbothered by mold and rust, I can almost appreciate Vancouver High School. Despite having stood for a hundred and twenty years, it’s still so full of life. Every year it has improved, be it with a significant increase in student size or a new paint job. Unlike people, who deteriorate over the years and gradually lose everything that means something to them.

The ride home is unusually quiet. Mom seems to be focused on the weather even though it’s just another average autumn day in the Pacific Northwest. Normally I’m a big fan of sitting in silence, but this



time it's like I'm locked in a cage of awkwardness where the only key is conversation.

"Is everything okay?" I ask. When I turn toward Mom, I notice that her cheeks have thin rivers of crystal liquid running over them and the whites of her eyes are a pale shade of pink. I hope it's due to really bad allergies, but hay fever is unlikely considering it's late November. She opens her mouth, but nothing comes out before she shuts it quickly. *I'll take that as a no.*

"Have you not heard the news? Jack is dead. He shot himself." With sobs obfuscating her speech, I can barely understand Mom.

I let out a snicker. It's my go-to reaction for when I don't know how to react, but I don't think it worked well for this particular situation. The only other thing I can muster up is a halfhearted "That's sad."

~~~

Netflix is an important hobby of many people my age, but the only time I ever watch television is when I really want to distract myself from my responsibilities. Since I have a unit test for physics tomorrow morning, I decide to prepare myself for it by watching *Seinfeld*.

I find myself laughing at one of Jerry's standup jokes when there's a knock on the door. When I peek out the window, I see Jack's mom. I've only met her once or twice before, but she's aged ten years since I last saw her. Crying people make me uncomfortable. I don't want to open the door, but I'm obligated to do so since she saw me looking at her.

"Uh, hi, Ms. Wilson. It's a tragedy, isn't it? Mom's making pasta for dinner. Wanna come inside?"

As she enters, she wipes her face with a beige handkerchief, staining it and her cheeks with charcoal-colored streaks. *I'll take that as a yes.* She makes herself comfortable in my preferred spot of the couch and I awkwardly position myself in the kitchen doorway. "I'll go call my mom; she's probably upstairs."

"Aria, I wanted to talk to you," blurts Ms. Wilson. That's a shame because I don't want to talk to her. But I stick around anyway. "Do you know why Jack did it?"

"To be honest, I didn't even know it happened," I reply.

Ms. Wilson's drawn-on left eyebrow raises and she purses her unnaturally thick lips. With all the botox she's had, I'm surprised her face can still move. Jack looked nothing like her, and I'm not sure if it's because of her surgeries or because he took after his dead dad. I don't miss much about him, but he had such nice eyes, as deep and cerulean as the sea, outlined with long brown lashes. I wonder how they look now that they've probably clouded up. After my grandpa died his chocolate-colored eyes turned a light blue.

"You don't know anything, huh?" Ms. Wilson chuckles a bit, but I don't think she finds my lack of knowledge about Jack funny. Maybe she also doesn't know how to feel about this case. "Nobody knows. This whole thing is so weird. He seemed fine before this."

Before his suicide, I always thought of Jack as an incredibly normal guy. Boring, even. He was on a couple of sports teams but never the MVP, he got good grades but never the highest, and he had a lot of friends but not any who really cared about him. On Facebook they're all posting their condolences, but just like me, they didn't realize

there was something wrong with him and did nothing to help. At least I don't pretend to care.

I don't reply to Ms. Wilson and it doesn't seem she has anything more to say, so she simply gets up and leaves.

~~~

As I step out of the car my cheek is greeted with a cold slap of water sliding off the tree branch hovering a few feet above me. An unusually cool breeze whispers across my face and neck, advising me to pull my oversized coat closer to my body. With every step I make, I hear the crunch of the warm-colored leaves under my boots, like a prolonged version of the sound made when you break a Hershey bar into multiple pieces.

The puddle in front of me shows a blurred and incomplete reflection of me, a pitch-black silhouette matching the clothes everyone wears today. I can't see the face that Jack somehow felt intrigued to ask to homecoming, my muddy lifeless eyes, my bloodless pale skin. Even at Jack's funeral I feel more dead than he is.

I enter the church and take a seat at the back, avoiding contact with any of my classmates or Ms. Wilson. They're all in the middle of a prayer, eyes closed, and they don't see me anyway. When the prayer ends, Ms. Wilson goes into a lengthy speech about how talented and nice Jack was and everyone except me starts sobbing. But the next words she says actually make me feel something. "I'll be passing the mic around for anyone who wants to talk about Jack."

Ms. Wilson gives the microphone to some lady who looks like her clone, but with grayer hair and more surgery. She turns out to be Jack's grandma and starts going into his childhood in great detail. It

feels like I'm sitting there for twelve hours. But there's a ray of sunshine in her eyes as she speaks. After that it's some kid I've seen around school, a really big freshman on the football team with Jack. During his stories, he simultaneously smiles and cries. I don't remember when I last did either of those things.

~~~

After the procession the guests are ushered into a room full of refreshments. Sandwiches and soda aren't really my thing so I try to leave, but Lucy blocks the only exit. With her smudged makeup, she resembles a dingy raccoon. I didn't think she even knew Jack.

"Hey, how are you holding up? It seems like you kept your tears in," she says. She has a bad habit of swinging her arms as she speaks, causing her to spill her Sprite onto the floor.

"Honestly? I don't care."

I'm expecting her to move aside, but she stays in my way.

"That must be nice," she replies.

I want to tell her that it isn't nice living like a machine.

Window

Angelika Cava

When I looked through you
and saw the cloudburst come:
The thunder's rumbles tickled my skin.
Lightning rebirthed my imagination.
I bathed in the downpour.

From afar I loved the sun I'd never known,
casting a glow upon all it sees
until the rays of light struck me.
My pallor mutated with flaming blotches
I said goodbye, shut the curtains.

Now I sit in nothing but gray.
Empty walls hide me from what you gave.
Every day I peek through your blanket.
Endless clouds mask the sky
nothing in nature shifts.

I miss the liquid pears from above
falling into my open mouth.
I long for the shaking that keeps me awake.
Please strike me! Strike me
with anything that isn't nothing.

i am the black cardigan
the one she keeps on a hanger in the closet
she never wears me anymore
but sometimes she takes me down and holds me
i still have a few of her tears on me
they dried a long time ago
but they are still here
she refuses to wash me

i am a special piece of clothing
more special than all the rest
i know this because she told me
i am special because *he* gave her to me
i used to be his favorite cardigan
he wore me the day they met

when i first came here,
i arrived in a box
i smelled of his cologne
she was laughter and tears
she held me to her nose and breathed in my scent
she slept with her arms around me that night
imagining that i was him, no doubt

then she kept me zipped away
in an airtight pocket of a purple suitcase
for months
occasionally taking me out to breathe me in
but always returning me to that pocket

until one day she took me out
and so much time had passed
that i no longer smelled like him
i could hear the tiny *crack* of her heart breaking
as she held me to her chest

the next day she decided to wear me
finally
i fit her a little loosely
but she didn't mind
and neither did i

she started wearing me more frequently
she took me to all kinds of new places
we kept each other warm
we were happy together

but one fateful day it happened
i started to unravel
i didn't mean to
but i'm not as young as i once was
time and frequent wear have made me age
a single thread came loose
at the end of one of my sleeves

she noticed it right away, of course
at first she did what they all do
in times like these
she pulled on the thread
and i began to unravel further
stitches came undone, ripping one at a time
she stopped immediately after

her face went white

she took me home and put me in this closet
she hasn't worn me
or washed me
ever since
she thinks i'm too fragile now
and she cannot bear to let me unravel further

silly girl
she thinks that keeping me intact
will allow her to keep him
doesn't she know?
he's already gone

- ***unraveled***

Mary Ellen Nicole Gross

Plucked

Sydney Rose Quintana

Do flowers get their hearts broken?

Do the carelessly plucked petals

ache

one

by

one?

Why would they know if he loves you?

They cannot read the minds of

boys

who

don't

care.

Be friends with the flowers.

Whisper secrets into their bloom.

And if he breaks your heart,

Let their sweet scent carry you home.

Not a Swan Song

Shannon Leigh

You've heard the fire-and-brimstone song
Of damnation raining down
Where rack and ruin rumble
And buildings tumble to the ground

Some like this idea of a world ablaze

But what if the end of days
Is blue?

What if the world we know will end
In gently lapping waves
That climb the shore so slow
We waste our chance for last-ditch saves?

What if our feet are wet
Before we even see the risk?
And we only fight once it's too late:
A quick-sand futile finish.

And when that future crashes
Like an everlasting tide
With mighty cleansing splashes
Upon stony human pride

Perhaps then the apocalypse,
As some said all along,
Will not be heralded by trumpets
But by blue notes of whale song.

Biographies

On the average day you can find **Grace Aklestad** constantly refreshing the New York Times app, watching Senate proceedings on C-SPAN, or reading an obscure book about the Middle East. She enjoys making music, primarily on the piano, and taking up new hobbies for a short time, most recently knitting. Grace hopes to become a foreign service officer for the State Department upon graduating from a JD/MA international relations program.

Renee Borcharding has wanted to be a writer since she was ten years old, and is currently enrolled in the English department to pursue that goal. She was the kid walking around with a book in her hand, constantly reading and volunteering to take summer school writing classes. Her favorite book series is Nancy Drew, and some of her role models are Oprah, Diane Keaton, Julia Roberts, and Barack Obama. Renee reads because she's curious, and writes to understand herself.

Garrett Broberg, a junior at CU, has used photography as a creative outlet for the past four years. Through the lens of a camera, he feels that we are able to see the true beauty around us and ensure we never forget our past. As excited as he is, Garrett claims to only be as talented as those that paved the way for him.

Shameless Plugs:

Instagram: @brobergproductions @joel_mccoy_photography

Garrett's Website: brobergproductions.foliohd.com

Montserrat Caro is from San Diego, CA and Rosarito, BC. She has a cat named Popoki that loves to bite her boyfriend's feet. Her mom always reminds her to be a chingona (a badass). She loves to read and write. She also loves to listen to Amy Winehouse while staring at the roof. "Mexico" in Nahuatl means, "the place at the center of the moon;" maybe that's why her head is always in the clouds?

Angelyka Cava is a third-year marketing major focused on communication studies. Although she doesn't say much in person, she loves to express the many thoughts and feelings running through her mind with written words. Besides spending her free time working on

poetry and prose, she enjoys listening to edgy music and spending time with family.

Ryan Chantel Connelly's idea of fun is spending all day in a hammock reading *Pride & Prejudice* again and again. She loves her dog Piper and agrees with Mark Twain when he said, "The dog is a gentleman; I hope to go to his heaven, not man's."

Joe Denniston is a psychology major with a history minor and is on the track and field team.

Anna Denos is eighteen years old and a freshman at Concordia. She is majoring in exercise and sports science with the aim of one day becoming a certified personal trainer and sports nutritionist. In her free time, Anna enjoys HIIT, running, weightlifting, and spending time outdoors. On rainy days, she can be found curled up with a cup of tea and a thick Jane Austen novel or composing poetry and stories of her own.

Dominique Donald is a senior, soon to hold a Bachelor of Arts in the field of humanities. She has picked up poetry as a form of expression, and her work can be found in the commons of Concordia. She is a poet, feminist, woman, Black, Latina, and proud. She loves the arts and advocates for more exposure to the world of art. Dominique would like to thank the smiles around her: the consistent forms of happiness.

Bailey Fjelstul enjoys spending time with people, moving, learning and exploring. At this stage in her life, these passions are manifest in studying ESS and Spanish, and running through Portland neighborhoods with her cross country and track teammates. She submitted photographs to this journal because she loves to capture the beauty and quirks of everyday life.

Valerie Foo is a junior at Concordia University. She is from Malaysia but spent most of her life in China. She is an education major and hopes to become an elementary school teacher after graduation. Her hobbies involve crafting, trying new food and things, and traveling the world.

Payton Gillis, an aspiring nurse at Concordia University, shares vulnerability through her life stories. Her main goal, besides owning at least ten dogs in her lifetime, is to shed light on dark situations through the beauty of creative nonfiction and poetry.

Tyler Grant has been involved in Concordia's student government, ASCU, for the past two years. He is a business administration major with aspirations to work in the tech industry in Portland.

Mary Gross is from Columbia Falls, Montana—but, if we're being honest, she loves Portland, Oregon more. She is currently a senior at Concordia University with an English major and a psychology minor. She loves travel, photography, and writing.

Julia C. Guzman (J.C.G.)

She's imperfect,

but she lies

She is broken and won't ask for help

She is messy

most of the time

She is all of this mixed up and baked in a beautiful pie

— Sara Bareilles

When a song speaks and you realize your soul is an old ugly book, one too many times opened. So, you turn away from it and start writing a new one.

Dana Hardy is passionate about Jesus, feminism, and the environment! She is an English major with a psychology minor, and after college plans to pursue a Master of Arts in science writing. When she isn't busy studying and writing papers, Dana spends her time drawing, cooking, and reading.

Ayla Johnson was a water nymph in a past life. She moved to the PNW because the rain tastes like home. She loves poetry, moonfairies, and long walks through her mind. Ayla would like to thank every person she's ever met at CU. "You gave me a piece of myself I thought I lost forever."

Calia Kammer studied education and Spanish at Concordia, graduating in 2018. She has since moved to Casa de Clara Catholic Worker in San Jose, California, where she lives and works with those experiencing homelessness. Calia writes to try to understand and give witness to her experiences with God through daily life and work.

Shannon Leigh is fortunate to have many loves, among them writing, the beauty of nature and science, magical worlds, her mama, her sister, her Stu-bear, her sweet chubby nephew, her darling fluffy dogs down home in the sun, and her incredible friends who make her days so much brighter. She is lucky in love, and lucky in life. The year of three cubed was phenomenal, a metamorphosis she wouldn't trade for anything.

Josey Noah Meats, president of Concordia's chapter of *Sigma Tau Delta*, is a senior studying English. He plans on continuing on to an MFA program following graduation—if not, then he is going to go live a life by the sea and write. You can find him in a state of constant distress and existential turmoil.

Asia McLaughlin is a junior at Concordia University. With a critical eye for fashion and photography, her heart is always in her work. She is studying to become a business administration major with a minor in marketing and art, and her life revolves around literature and capturing the raw beauty of passion and emotion in her work. When she is not studying, you can find her painting or shooting photos—always pursuing her love for simple things.

Brooke Nelson's time at Concordia has been spent neck-deep in literature classes, and she is deeply grateful to her peers and professors for nurturing any talent she has. She sees writing as both creative expression and a vehicle for catharsis. Included here are the first, but not the last, of her published works.

Liana Parks is excited to have been a part of *The Promethean* in her fifth and final year at Concordia. As an extroverted introvert, she loves both hanging out with friends and curling up with a good book. She plans to pursue a master's in teaching English to speakers of other languages, and travel the world spreading the love of language and literature. She hopes you enjoy this edition of *The Promethean*, and keep reading.

Sydney Rose Quintana is a junior psychology major from Los Angeles. She has been a part of *The Promethean* for the last three years and she loves every bit of it. This year, in addition to this passion project, she served as Vice President for ASCU and tried to survive taking three Reed Mueller classes in one semester.

Sydney Ramsey is a full-time business student at Concordia University, who will be graduating in December 2019. Sydney is engaged on-campus with the Office of Service Leadership and as a groundskeeper. When Sydney is not studying or working, she is drawing, playing music, collecting comic books, or watching *The Office* with her roommates. Follow her art page on Instagram @squidneyart.

Kittie Robbins is a freshman English major with a concentration in creative writing. She wrote and published her first book before starting high school. Her dream is to become a famous author. Aside from writing, she enjoys listening to music (K-pop), binging Netflix, and being antisocial in general. In her spare time, she is the secretary for the Queer & Allies Club on campus. Her favorite pastime is Sarcasm.

Kristin Rothell loves getting lost in Powell's, is a frequent flyer at Barnes and Noble and she thoroughly enjoys getting lost in the pages of a good book. She moved to Portland for the rain...and school. But mostly the rain.

Revekka Shirayeva was born in Portland, Oregon during the year of 1999. While Revekka was born in the United States, her parents emigrated from the former Soviet Union over twenty-five years ago. As a result, learning the English language was a struggle. She and her older three brothers supported each other in school and slowly overcame the language barrier. She is currently a sophomore at Concordia University and will be starting nursing school in the fall.

Alena Willbur has been writing since she was a young girl, but now she wants to create her own story by traveling and maybe saving the world, one person at a time. In the meantime, you can probably find her at the beach.